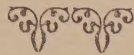


John D Haas
Washington D.C.



THAT
CAPRI AIR



EDWIN CERIO



THAT CAPRI AIR

with a Foreword by

Francis Brett Young

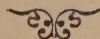


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FOREWORD



THE volume from which this series of sketches has been translated, Edwin Cerio's *Aria di Capri*, its author's first essay in imaginative literature, has made a spectacular debut in Italy. In that country, of late, owing to the recent unanimity of the press, literature has taken the place of politics as a subject of journalistic discussion; and *Aria di Capri*, profiting by this fortunate lacuna, has excited fervent admiration among reviewers.

Popular success has followed. I have seen copies of the book on sale in haberdasher's shops, in drug stores, in cafés, and even aboard those steamers which, somewhat loosely, connect our island with the City of Naples—which is more than can be said for the works of d'Annunzio, Pirandello, or Papini. An obscure English writer has plagiarized its healthy Rabelaisian elements in a volume of cheap pornography. A number of Germans have enthusiastically stolen its translation rights. Classical professors, from Leipzig, have gravely arraigned its errors in the Latin tongue and archaeology. In America, Mr. Ernest Boyd has asked himself whether it may not be yet another of the Protean manifestations of Mr. Norman Douglas. And a firm of distillers, in Milan, has applied for the right to use its title as the designation of a new liqueur.

The last is, I think, a reasonable proposal, in the best spirit of modern, imaginative commerce; since *Aria di Capri* is, like Certosina—(see the story of that name)—“a stimulating beverage compounded of all the aromatic essences of the island.” Mr. Boyd's suggestion, on the other hand, seems less justifiable; for Edwin Cerio resembles the author of *South Wind* in nothing but his scene and the unreliable nature of his



archaeological allusions and references, against which, with the documentary accuracy of their race, the Leipzig professors protested. But the art, the wit, the humour of *Aria de Capri* are as incontestable as its truth.

For every word of this remarkable book is true. Each one of the fantastic figures that makes his gesture on Cerio's canvas has existed in the flesh, or, if not in the flesh, at least in the spirit. Some of them, without doubt, exist (or existed) in the same relation to historical fact as that which Timberio bears to Tiberius. Yet a living myth (as the author has wisely suggested) is more vital than a dead Emperor.

But surely, you will ask, these pictures are exaggerated? Only so far as all imaginative art is an exaggeration or minification of the thing observed and imagined. In Capri we subscribe to the maxim of Tertullian: *Credo quia impossibile est*. If a thing is not superficially impossible we have doubts as to its authenticity; and so it is that Douglas's *South Wind* has been mistakenly regarded as an ironic masterpiece. Whereas, in reality, it is nothing of the sort. It is a sober chronicle of facts, set down by a hard-headed, soft-hearted Scotsman in impeccable prose. And *Aria di Capri* has a like authenticity. It is as strictly veracious, in spirit, as the work of a primitive historian. The myth of today is the history of the day after tomorrow. Scholars have often smiled at the credulities of Herodotus; but, in the light of modern Egyptological research, Herodotus has often, recently, laughed last.

So, *Aria di Capri* is a complete insular cosmogony. So far as I know there is only one fantastic figure of the first importance that has escaped being recorded, directly, in its pages: and that is our only living representative of the genus which the Curator of Natural Beauties adumbrated in his series of monographs: *Homo Capraearum*—that creature whom the poetess Ada Negri (who certainly could not have read this book) once addressed as L'Uomo di Capri: Capri Man. In other words, Edwin Cerio.

He is not described in any single paper; but that is a result of sheer modesty, for he permeates all of them. Let us, for the

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sake of future history (or myth) repair the deficiency and be more precise.

He was born at Capri in the Era of Reform, the era of Marston, Lord Bexley and Miss Sophie Anderson—(see *The Reformers*)—the son of an East Anglian mother and an Italian father. Native critics have said that his Italian is a little foreign in flavour; and that is, perhaps, why this book (and more particularly its humour) seem so easily translatable into our language. He was born an artist, and for that reason (compare the academical career of Miradois) became a doctor of science and, later, a naval architect. Because this island, the very soil of it, was the deepest rooted and most permanent love in all his life, he spent the greater part of his early years in Germany. Because he was an engineer of genius, a bad sailor, and knew nothing whatever of commerce, Krupp (who must surely have read *Aria di Capri*) chose him as his sole South American representative. And, since his own particular branch of study was submarines—he was always happier under the water than on its surface—his earliest published work, a technical engineering paper of which he is far prouder than of *Aria di Capri*, is concerned with the design of fishing-boats.

On the outbreak of the World War, with a logic that seems, somehow, out of the picture, he joined the Italian Naval-construction Staff in Rome; and was so successful there in affairs of the strictest secrecy and so disliked automobiles that, when the war was over, the Fiat firm decided to entrust him with the whole of their publicity.

At that moment he stood in imminent danger of becoming an industrial millionaire; so, suddenly regaining his sense of values, he came, like Weber, to Capri, and proceeded to spend the money that he could not earn here (except as a hotel-keeper) in the production of a series of costly monographs on the Flora, the Coleoptera, the Pergolas, the Gardens and the Architecture of the island generally. He also founded a monthly journal, which appeared three times a year at irregular intervals, for the encouragement of the Arts. The



monographs, of course, were confidential documents designed for presentation rather than for sale; their elegant format made a commercial price prohibitive. In *Aria di Capri* he has fathered them on the Curator of Natural Beauties; so that you might easily imagine that they do not exist. But *Aria di Capri*, as I have said, is a veracious history, and copies are still to be found in unexpected places, rare bibliographical items, all association-copies signed by the author, who felt that it would be a pity to fly in the face of precedent by letting anyone buy them.

These first essays in literature were so successful that, naturally, he abandoned them abruptly, and embarked on a political career. Those were the days of Veruotto and Canon Battisterio. Cerio succeeded Veruotto as Mayor of Capri. During his term of office the roads were never "cleaned up," (see *Costanziello Consule*) the *macchia* never "cleansed." He was that aesthete mayor whose provision of barrows for rubbish precipitated the scavengers' strike. And when he decided that the eighty thousand odd liras of the visitors' tax, assigned by law, to the maintenance of roads, trees, and other amenities, could not legitimately be spent on the provision of fireworks for the festival of San Costanzo, the population turned against a tyranny that had not been equalled since the days of Tiberius, and the Mayor resigned.

This, on the whole, was fortunate; for it enabled him to find a new outlet for his energies and, being a naval architect, to start building on dry land. To be brief, he invented the ancient Capri style of architecture, complete, with historical traditions. His monograph, *La Casa nel paesaggio di Capri*, shows convincingly the sources from which, through the ages, that style has been evolved: the Teleboans, the Phœnicians the Saracens, the Aragonese—to say nothing of Mangoni. It has another name, The Style of the Sirens; because the Sirens, also, had a hand in it. It might equally well have been called the *Stile Azzuro*. And Cerio did more than originate this ancient style. He practised it. The most beautiful houses on the island today are his creations.

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And then, just when distinguished architects from both sides of the Atlantic came flocking to admire and imitate that Ancient Capri Style which Cerio had invented in 1920, his creative faculty took surprising turn. He invented another Capri Style in short stories which owes nothing (except prime materials) to the Teleboans and Phoenicians, and which may be studied today in *Aria di Capri*.

What that style is, the reader may judge for himself. It has humour without facetiousness, originality without strain, irony without bitterness. It is confused, perhaps, of its very richness; yet clarified by the constant revelation of a personality which is unique of its kind, the spirit of this very remarkable man. And, above all else, the book justifies its title. It isolates, for the first time in literature, that fifth element which distinguishes the air of Capri from all other airs: an element which, if the chemists had not anticipated him, as Ehrlich forestalled Lovatti (see *Certosina*), he might, appropriately, have named Selenium.

One word as to this translation. It comes from several pens. Mr. Norman Douglas has translated *Certosina*; Mr. R. W. Reynolds, *The Temple of Cybele*; Mr. Louis Golding, two sections: *Westergard* and *Weber*. I, myself, originally dealt with *The Reformers* and *Danse Macabre*, but must be held responsible, with reservations, for all the rest.

The reservations are these: During the process of translation and revision I had the benefit of the author's collaboration. He has insisted on a number of lengthy "cuts," and often, where he has not made "cuts," he has so modified his text that, if he had had his own way, the connection between original and translation would have been of the slightest. He appears to be dissatisfied with *Aria di Capri*, and already has his eye on other work. But whether, having achieved this pagan fantasy, he will embark on a work of Christian realism, or abandon literature altogether for the invention of helicopters, is more than I can guess.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG.

Anacapri. 1927.





CONSULE “ COSTANZIELLO ”



COSTANZIELLO VERUOTTO rose to power with the programme of an unshaken belief in *Roma Intangibile*: Hands off Rome! He was elected, as were the other Town Councillors, unanimously. In Costanziello's time factious divisions were unknown. The election posters spoke clearly; they said: *Electors, vote unanimously!* And the electors needed no further persuasion; they invariably voted unanimously for the liberal party, for the hotelkeepers, the priests, for the farmers and for the fishermen—five parties who came into office in rotation, two at a time, one with a majority and the other with a minority, but each standing firmly for the programme of *Roma Intangibile*. Did the Priests look like getting into office? Provided that they did not lay hands on Rome—for, on the Roman question Capri could make no compromise—the priests might go ahead. The priests were not explicit about Rome, they were not inclined to commit themselves openly about anything; but they let it be understood that they would leave Rome pretty much as it was. The liberals, the hotel keepers, the peasants and the fishermen, on the other hand, declared their policy openly: they printed posters in green, white and red with prophetic mottoes: *Rome or death—Here we are and here we stay.*

It was on this platform that Costanziello became Mayor, though, in that election, the issues had been somewhat confused; nobody quite knew which party ought to be returned, and so the electors, undecided, voted unanimously, as usual, some for one party, some for the other, so that when the Councillors had to nominate the Mayor they discovered that the

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parties were evenly divided. Since none of them could command a majority they decided to draw lots for the office of Mayor; they drew, and Costanziello was elected.

Now everybody knows who Costanziello is: he is *Cav. Uff.*; he was our War Mayor; his name is connected in history with the incident of the German submarine; it is also associated with two reforms—the cleaning of the country lanes and the cleansing of the *macchia*—which make all other Communes in Italy green with envy. And he will always be remembered as the head of the administration which gave Capri its Hospital for Chronic Invalids and its First Aid Station.

Yet, when he was elected, Costanziello was relatively obscure. He did not know a word of the Latin for which his speeches later became famous. When he was elected Mayor the Councillors who had drawn lots with him were surprised; the entire population was surprised and nobody more than Costanziello himself. He scarcely breathed a word to a soul until the inaugural sitting at which he had to announce his programme; and even then he was brief, but to the point; he let it be known his determined belief in *Roma Intangibile* was still unshaken.

Meanwhile he had already come to terms with the Canon, Don Gaudenzio Battisterio, on the main direction of his policy.

Canon Battisterio had not even the remotest interest in politics; he was, first and last, a Churchman, a preacher, an apostolic *protonotario*, confessor to the nuns of Santa Teresa and keeper of the Parish Archives. He had, he declared, neither time nor taste for politics.

Early in the morning, long before dawn, he used to come up from the Piccola Marina into the town to celebrate mass for the nuns. At six o'clock, when mass was over, the nuns had ready for him a big cup of steaming chocolate, a brioche and a little bunch of mimosa; only a few flowers, five or six odorous tufts of feathery yellow, which they had gathered in the old convent garden, from the tree which the Venerable Madre Serafina di Dio planted. That tree has a history; it is supposed



to have been grown from a cutting of the first mimosa—*Acacia indica Farnesiana*—that Paul III, Farnese, imported from India, and planted in the *Hortus Palatinus*. The Venerable Sister Serafina was given that cutting by Cardinal Farnese, who afterwards became Pope Paul III, together with a copy of that precious volume, *Descriptio rariorum plantarum quae continentur Romae in horto Farnesiano*, which is still preserved in the convent library.

When Canon Battisterio had powdered his nose with the yellow pollen of the mimosa, and pressed the flowers in his breviary, he proceeded to the Sacristy of the ex-Cathedral to attend to the affairs of the Capitol. Afterwards, at about eight o'clock, he would just drop in at the Town Hall. Costanziello Veruotto, the Mayor, had begged him to drop in at the Town Hall every morning for Latin. Veruotto had decided to learn Latin; not the complete language, of course, but the few well-chosen words that are essential to political speeches.

The Canon himself considered that speeches without Latin were like loaves without leaven; they all fell flat.

In the early days of his office Veruotto had had a bit of Latin put into his speeches by the Secretary Rondelli, a Northerner from Piacenza, but he had never been able to reconcile himself to the Piacentine pronunciation; what he wanted was real Capri Latin. You see there are still Latin traditions at Capri; you can find a line of Suetonius to fit each incident of our everyday life. The local dialect is also full of Latin words. When a Latin was asked if he would do something, he said: *Cras!* which means to-morrow. The Capri people say: *Craje!* which is derived from *cras*. If an inhabitant of Capri is asked to do something, he may do it to-morrow or perhaps the day after to-morrow. But even if he does not do it at all he always says *Craje!*

It was Secretary Rondelli's Latin which caused the mistake about the Oak of Augustus when General Diaz visited the island.

The Oak of Augustus had been specially prepared for the General's arrival. It should have burst into leaf at the moment



of his landing, like the one which sprouted when Augustus disembarked after the battle of Actium. Everyone will remember how Augustus rejoiced at the omen and took a fancy to the island. Instead of which General Diaz merely looked puzzled, because Veruotto had not explained the matter properly, and when, at the end of his speech, he should have said *languentesque ramos convaluisse* he became confused and said: *conguentesque lamos ronvaluisse*. It was after this that the Mayor decided to take his Latin lessons from the Canon.

Don Gaudenzio Battisterio arrived at the Town Hall every morning about eight o'clock, and to pass the time ran his eye over the correspondence which had just arrived and all the official papers awaiting signature, which, at that time, constituted the bulk of the Municipal correspondence. In the margins of the most urgent letters he pencilled notes as to how they should be answered. At half past eight the Secretary arrived, followed by the Aldermen, councillors, and clerks together with their personal friends. At nine precisely, hot from a shooting expedition, the Mayor appeared, and while the others entertained themselves by talking in the Secretary's room, he and the Canon retired into his Office, for Latin.

From nine till ten, which were his office hours, the Mayor was not to be disturbed by anyone: he was learning Latin.

The Canon took great pains in teaching him, because he was really fond of Veruotto. From outside the office raised voices could be heard—*Tu quoque?*

—*Io quoque!* the Mayor replied.

Thus they shouted at each other for a quarter of an hour, until the Mayor had got the phrase into his head. Then they lowered their voices and one heard nothing but murmurs; they were talking business. The Canon had neither the time nor the inclination to interest himself in politics; he preferred to keep his hands clean of them. But if they insisted on asking his advice in a friendly way . . .

They always insisted; all of them—the Mayor, the Assessors and the Secretary; they insisted so strongly that the poor Canon finished by framing bye-laws, compiling the



balance sheet, and settling the order of the day for the council meetings; he fixed the tariff for cabs and the salaries of the clerks . . . And the lists of local taxation? They pestered him so persistently about them, that it was always he, the Canon, who had to revise the assessments.

Thus, little by little, the Mayor learned all the Latin required for his speeches; he learned to say what Cæsar said on the brink of the Rubicon; he knew the last words of Caligula, Nero's words at the burning of Rome, and when the occasion arose, he knew how to say *Usque ad tandem, Morituri te salutant, Civis Capraearum sum, Fiat justitia ne pereat mundus, Melius est pauca verba idoneo effundere, Dulce est desipere in loco, Vanitas vanitatum . . .* and many other phrases which he inevitably brought out at the wrong moment.

He learned a number of difficult words in Italian as well; he knew almost as many of them as Gabriele d' Annunzio. For example, he would say that he had an "*infriable*" majority in the Council; that he had a "*hermetic*" faith in the destinies of the Island and, if it had not been for his opponents who were always "*nociferous*", heaven only knows what he might not have done. And he was right; for never had there been an administration sounder than his. The Canon had advised him to form a Coalition. Actually, at that time, Giolitti had formed a Coalition Ministry in Rome; and no one should ever say that Capri lagged behind Rome. But though the Giolitti Ministry fell after two years, Veruotto's Administration lasted for nine, because his coalition was supported by an "*infriable*" majority.

First of all there was the baker Don Matteo Vandelesio, Councillor for Public Works. Don Matteo was a power in himself. Next Michele Capasso, Councillor for the Grande Marina, who commanded the votes of all the fishermen and coral sellers; the rest consisted of unimportant figures, there by chance, who represented nobody in particular, but Veruotto said that he would answer for them.

The minority soon began to grow restless. The first battle was fought over the drainage system.



Now the main drain of Capri, which collects material from all the big hotels, has its outlet at the Unghia Marina, the most enchanting spot on the island, and has been, from time immemorial, the perquisite of the Majority. It is a triumph of insanitary engineering. The farmers of the land through which it passes, always support the Councillors of the Majority. Secretary Rondelli, in Veruotto's time, maintained that this sewer was, and should always remain, the last trench of the administration; so if anybody risked suggesting that it needed repairs, Veruotto at once became adamant and replied with one of those Latin phrases which have become historical. *Noli me tangere*, he said. Nobody, in short, might touch the *cloaca* except the farmers in the vicinity, who had uncovered it, and by deviating its contents into their ditches, had succeeded in producing those early vegetables which the leader of the majority had declared in public to be "the pride of Capri."

But the minority had joined battle, and intended to fight it out to a finish; their leader, Lawyer Bastogi, proposed a conciliatory measure, a compromise. Nobody respected tradition more than himself. He did not object to the main drain being left uncovered in the interests of agriculture. But there was another drain, the sewer of the Grande Marina, which passed through the land of two of his colleagues, Councillors of the opposition, and had never yet been touched. He could not understand why this drain, which collected the refuse of an equally important class of electors, should remain hermetically closed, or why it should be treated as the Cinderella of the island's drainage system. And foreseeing that the Mayor would certainly reply with a Latin phrase, Lawyer Bastogi, with oratorical grace, concluded:

"Fiat justitia ne pereat mundus!"

But it was Vandalesio, the Councillor for Public Works, not the Mayor, who replied to Bastogi. The Majority, he said, were opposed to the creation of new precedents; and the precedent of the *cloaca maxima* was already established. It had



been constructed on the remains of the Cloaca of Augustus; it smelt, as one might say, of the Roman dominion; it passed through the Unghia Marina, and through the gardens where the rose trees and scented myrtles of Julia Augusta had grown; Julia herself had tended her celebrated roses with the products of that great work. That drain enshrined a tradition of two thousand years. The farmers of the Unghia Marina had their rights. As for the peasants of the Grande Marina, "let them arrange it amongst themselves."

The motion of the minority was rejected, and Mayor Veruotto, commenting on the voting, exclaimed:

"Vae victis!"

Gradually his passion for Latin began to infect the entire administration. The Assessor of the Grande Marina took it worst of all. Michele Capasso was ambitious.

One morning, while the Mayor was having his Latin lesson with the Canon, when Councillors, Assessors and friends of the administration, both foreign and native, had foregathered to drink coffee in the Secretary's room, the high voice of Michele Capasso might have been heard thundering an enormous Latin word.

"Salimastrum! . . . Cercis salimastrum!"

"Siliquastrum" . . . retorted Mr. Spark, the oldest English resident, who raised Rhode Island Reds. Whatever were they discussing? Nothing more than the name of a tree.

The Assessor of the Grande Marina had planted, through the agency of Don Fifi, the municipal gardener, a double row of trees stretching between the jetty and the funicular railway station; one pair of trees for every coral stall.

You must realise that the coral-sellers dominate the electoral situation at the Grande Marina. They, poor things, stand grilling in the summer sun when the hordes of American tourists arrive. It had become necessary to provide the coral



sellers with a little shade, not so much for their own sake as for that of their wares. When the coral sellers hawk the real Capri corals, that are dredged up from the Blue Grotto, they bawl at the top of their voices:

“*Veri coralli* . . . Very corals, milady.”

But the real Capri corals, those corals of the Blue Grotto which must never be confused with imitations, are so delicately tinted that they fade in the sun. It is the fault of those wretched aniline dyes. Before the war, when the Blue Grotto corals came direct from Germany, their colours were reasonably fast. Nowadays they fade appallingly—unlike the coral sellers who go redder and redder: not because the “very corals” give them qualms of conscience, but on account of the actinic rays. On the cheeks of coral-sellers sunburn is very picturesque; to corals it is fatal.

So, every year, at the Grande Marina, a new avenue of trees was planted to provide shade for the coral sellers, and employment for Don Fifi. Unfortunately they always withered because they were planted in sand and their roots reached down into brackish water. At last after many experiments Councillor Capasso discovered a variety of tree which his new knowledge of Latin assured him would thrive on salt.

Cercis salimastrum, the Judas tree, it was called. Or rather *Cercis salimastrum* was what Don Fifi, the gardener, had called it. But Mr. Spark, who ordered Sutton and Sons’ English catalogue every year was an authority on all the Latin names of the plants.

“*Si-li-quas-trum* . . . not salimastrum,” he corrected.

“As you will”—the Councillor for the Marina conceded. “Meanwhile we must replace the withered trees . . .”

“The withered trees? Oh, I’ll look after them” said the Councillor for Public Works, who was also the baker.

It was his particular job to deal with everything that could possibly be burnt in an oven. He would gladly have made a public contract for the trimming of the trees as well. But a



public contract was not to be spoken of—embezzlement, speculation and nepotism were unknown under Veruotto's Administration. Everything of that kind was done by private treaty.

"A Councillor"—the Canon Battisterio always said—"should be like Cæsar's wife. Can you imagine the wife of Cæsar undertaking the trimming of the trees by public contract?"

Instead of making a contract the Municipality simply agreed that the Councillor for Public Works should undertake the trimming of the trees—as it is called—twice a year, *gratis*.

And the Councillor kept the trimmings. That arrangement has modified the whole arboreal architecture of the island. The trees in the streets, in the public gardens and in the woods, ceased to have branches; they never spoiled a view. It was the Councillor for Public Works who saw to that. The trees of Capri have a fine, straight trunk, slim and graceful; and right at the top, where a ladder cannot reach them, a beautiful bunch of foliage.

But to return to the Councillor. How could he undertake a work like that gratuitously? He undertook the thorough trimming of the trees, *gratis et amore Dei*. He took the branches for his oven, and as a compensation for his trouble was given another private contract for cleaning up the *macchia*.

Perhaps you have never heard of *the cleaning up of the macchia*; perhaps you do not even know what the *macchia*, our Capri *macchia* is?

The *macchia* is a green mantle, a dense brake of ilex, lentisk, heather and arbutus, springing from an undergrowth of aromatic shrubs, couched upon a carpet of crocuses, anemones, violets and cyclamen; the whole an ill-governed disorderly vegetation.

At the Town Hall they maintain that it is a useless vegetation, and, therefore, see to its removal every year. They also have a feeling that it is unwholesome. This defect is due, no doubt, to the air. Have you heard people say—"It's the

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Capri air!" and have you noticed that when they say this they wink and make you realise that there are certain things which need to be explained?

That Capri air? But isn't it renowned as the healthiest in the world? Isn't it as celebrated as the waters of Vichy, or the mud of Carlsbad? Of course, it's the most wholesome air in the world. Then why should it need explaining?

Alas, the air of Capri cannot be explained. It is what it is. In good society it isn't even mentioned; at the most one alludes to some historical examples of its effects: "Tiberius?" Yes, all that is historical exaggeration. But there are other cases. There is Crispina, the wife of Commodus, and Lucilla, who created a scandal over her affair with the Prefect of the Pretorians. Slippery ground!

If one wants the thing explained one must go back to prehistoric times. In those at least the ground is more solid and there is no danger of slipping.

Let us remember Telon. His is a typical case. He was king of the Teleboans—"the people far from the land of their birth"—and he came to Capri in extreme old age.

The Teleboans were the first foreigners to come to the island; they were also called, in Phœnician, *Harum* and *Karimi*, people without clothes—as naked as the Germans whom one still sees in summer on our beaches. Telon simply had to come to Capri. He left his wives behind in Acarnania, as they were useless to him; not one of them had succeeded in giving him an heir. Telon reigned for many years at Capri, and ended by marrying a passing nymph of the Sebeti. This nymph provided him with an heir, Ebalus, who later, with Turnus, fought against Aeneas, as everybody knows. But didn't you say that Telon was aged and decrepit? Ah—that Capri air!

We were speaking to the macchia. . .

If you come to Capri in late Spring, you will feel what the macchia can do. The macchia is a pomander of Mediterranean essences; from myriads of little leaves, glistening in the sun, it distils the perfumes which impregnate the Capri air. Those

wafts of thyme and wormwood, rosemary and myrtle soon make you understand what happened to the decrepit Telon and the Sebetian nymph.

During Veruotto's Administration they foresaw and feared these things at the Town Hall, and for that reason they cleaned up the Macchia every Spring.

When they spoke of uprooting the withered *Cercis* at the Grande Marina that morning, the Councillor for Public Works, who was responsible for the trimming of the trees and the cleaning of the macchia, said:

"The *Cercis*? I will see to that, at my own expense . . . that is if the Mayor agrees."

The Mayor? But where was he?

He was there, listening to the discussion, and nobody knew it. He was always there, huddled up behind the Secretary's table, very quiet, scarcely breathing, and nobody knew that he was there, until an idea came to him and he decided to speak. And his idea always came in Spring; it came, almost always through an association of ideas.

It was really Spring that morning, and through the open window drifted the warm scent of broom. The ginestra proclaims itself thus, unexpectedly, at Capri. In the late Spring its bloom is heralded by a wave of perfume, hotly pursued by others which swamp the nostrils. It is this unexpected scent which disturbs you, and makes you understand that there is something not quite right (that Capri air!)—that nature is getting a little out of hand. Mayor Veruotto was particularly sensitive to these olfactory assaults; he had a nose! Indeed Costanziello's nose had become proverbial: It was a conspicuous organ, solidly planted between prominent brows; it was fleshy, almost prehensile, and never missed a smell even in flight. Capri odours never had known such an iron discipline as his. He made no distinction. Odours good and bad, perfume of ginestra and effluvia from the drains—Costanziello controlled them one and all with that sense of perfect justice, that equable and placid spirit which made his nose a depository of pure ideals, the unshakable



stronghold of those firm principles which are to-day, alas! only a memory.

Through the open window of the Town Hall there came, I say, a great waft of ginestra perfume. They were speaking of the trees in the streets . . . Association of ideas . . . The Mayor dilated his nostrils, and while the idea was coagulating in his brain, he risked, in Latin: "*Oportet . . . oportet . . .* do I make myself clear?

"*Oportet laborare*" the Canon completed, and Costanziello encouraged, put his idea into words:

"*A propos*" he said—"What about cleaning the roads?" And seeing that nobody replied, he continued: "Must I always have to think of everything! Must it always be me?"

That was the plain truth; it was always he, Costanziello, who had to think of everything; now he had to think of the cleaning of the streets which was almost the most important act of his administration, his own invention.

He had thought of everything beforehand, without even consulting the Canon. One fine morning he said to Don Gaudenzio Battisterio:

"Isn't it about time to clean up the roads? The country lanes are becoming impassable."

The Canon had not quite understood.

"Isn't that the job of the Urban Cleaning Department?"

Veruotto smiled: "The Urban Cleaning Department! Whatever has that got to do with it?"

Ah, the Urban Cleaning Department of those days! . . . Now it is only a memory, a tradition; one day it will be a myth, like the song of the Sirens, the wanderings of Ulysses or the Administration of Mayor Veruotto.

It is a tradition, yes, and yet in Costanziello's time it functioned, and if it had not been for that other Mayor—the one who succeeded Costanziello, and who, fortunately, didn't last long—it would still be functioning.

He didn't last long, that other Mayor, but he did remarkable things. He bought wheelbarrows for the road-sweepings



and thus precipitated the strike of the dustmen, and all the trail of disasters that followed it.

It was at the time when Marinetti first came to the island, and the new Mayor, for an entire Summer, kept Capri agitated with futurist experiments. He began with the Blue Grotto.

The Blue Grotto is also a tradition, perhaps the most valuable of all the traditions, because it produces three hundred thousand lire a year which provide the fireworks for the festival of our patron saint and for the set piece which is let off on the quay of the Grande Marina in honour of Santa Maria della Libera. The new Mayor undertook the revision of the Capri landscape and had the Blue Grotto painted futuristically.

Artists who come to Capri are allowed to do as they please; perhaps they do a little too much as they please. It is clearly understood that they are not obliged to paint the Blue Grotto. They may paint the Faraglioni just as they wish to, with or without the hole; they may paint the Natural Arch (in which the hole is compulsory because the Arch is officially listed in the schedule of Natural Beauties, under the law for the Protection of the Landscape); they may paint Bella Carmelina and old Spadaro. They are not obliged, I repeat, to paint the Blue Grotto. There is no bye-law, no ordinance which compels them to place, in the foreground, the large stalactite column and the ruins of the secret passage down which Tiberius came to wallow voluptuously with his water-nymphs. Nor need they place, in the background, the boat with its pair of lovers—she is blonde, and one can guess that he is singing the *Lorelei*—and the fisher lad who dives, with silvered body, to bring up the nickel lire which the young American ladies throw for him. There is nothing in the nature of legal obligation, but there is something more; an elementary sense of decency, a proper respect for tradition. And the Blue Grotto is always painted like that. Even the colours are standardized: ultramarine and carmine lake for violet effects, Veronese green and Prussian blue, for the water and ceiling.



Instead of which the new Mayor had it painted by Prampolini in dynamic prisms of Indian yellow, with a plastic composition of optical planes based on an octagonal system of fluid perspective. And, as if that were not enough, after the futurist Blue Grotto came the affair of the Monacone.

The Monacone is the *Apragopolis* of Augustus, the isle of lotus eaters, the scared rock of the "donothings" of Suetonius's story. And on Monacone, there stands, to add to its sanctity, the tomb of Masgaba—*Conditor insulae*, the African architect of imperial palaces, who inspired Augustus with the only verse he ever composed, of which there only remains the American version:

 "*Blazing with light I see the founder's tomb.*"

Very well, this new Mayor actually proposed that part of the public revenue should be applied to the erection of a stage above the tomb of Masgaba, a stage on which the *Corps de ballet* of the Capri Russian Colony would have performed a synthetic dance of explosive legs.

Then, after Prampolini's Blue Grotto and the stage on Monacone, he thought of the wheelbarrows for the road-sweepings. When Costanziello heard about it—he was an old Councillor then—he said "usque ad tandem?"

Because the wheelbarrows were dead against the tradition of collecting the sweepings by hand and carrying them on the shoulder, in baskets. They were also against the traditional method of sweeping. By this method all the rubbish was gathered into little heaps, spread at intervals along the streets, and each sweeper attacked his own little heap, loaded a basket with a portion of it and carried it, on his back, to a point midway between Capri and Anacapri, where there is a neutral zone, a sort of buffer state, on which both communes agreed to dump their rubbish.

The last instalment for the wheelbarrows has not yet been paid; perhaps it never will be paid; but what would be the use of paying it? They were smashed up after the first week, on the day of the strike. The street cleaners downed baskets



on Sunday, and both the firm attitude of the new Mayor, and the honeyed words with which he sought to persuade the strikers that for their own dignity and the dignity of Capri they should take them up again, were wasted. The foreman of the street-sweepers interrupted him.

"This rubbish"—shouted the foreman—"has always been carried on a man's shoulders! Push those wheelbarrows over!"

And from the chorus of the strikers:

"It's a *scuorno* . . . a shame! We aren't animals we're Christians! We want out baskets back!"

Thus, once again tradition triumphed; and when Veruotto returned for his second term of office the good old custom of road-sweeping, of cleaning up the country lanes, and of cleansing the *macchia* was restored.

All this, as I began to say, took place in the Spring. At this time the Capri air sets your head spinning. The whole island conspires to celebrate the bacchanale of Flora. Wherever you walk, sudden odours, stronger than wine, more intoxicating than music, more blinding than the mid-day sun, assail you. The air is thrilled with the warm sighs of enamoured roses, fierce breaths of jasmine, hot gusts of orange blossom. Through the bright sky there sweeps, with ringing hoof-beats, a valkyrie host of madly-surging perfumes. A sweet and sensuous warmth pervades the island.

On the sheltered shore of the Piccola Marina, she dons a petticoat of flagrant yellow, the shrillest note in all that crying gamut of colour. The lanes are invaded by mutinous hosts of flowers; from every wall the cataracts of *mesembryanthemum* sweep down in torrents of mad magenta; cascades of fragile *complanulas* start from rocky crevices in jets of starry, amethystine bloom, mingling with rivulets of burning azure *lithospermum*, floods of *convolvulus*, white and blue, and that choice flower, the *Convolvulus Cneorum*. The common *parietaria*, that sturdy outlaw, struggles, in deadly riot, with the wild capers, till all the ways are ensanguined with the red blood of poppies. Oh, do not venture far from the haunts of men, ye who are vowed to chastity, in that treacherous season,

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lest unawares, you set eyes upon the orgy of the asphodels.

The asphodels?

Trust them not, I say. When they are freshly cut and tied in bunches and put in water indoors they have the harmless languid air of sad and plaintive lovers. But, when night comes, these harmless flowers fill the room with odours of dead passion dangerous to the soul . . . and how much more beneath the solitude of the open sky!

It was under the open sky, in a mead of asphodels, that Telon knew the nymph of the Sebeti . . .

As soon as he became aware of the first wafts of ginestra blossom Mayor Veruotto got to work. In the municipal budget a sum of two hundred lire had been set aside for the cleaning of the roads. But what could be done with two hundred lire? It was scarcely enough to pay the street-cleaners for the extra work of carrying the stuff to Vandalesio's oven. The Mayor mobilised a corps of volunteers—almost all peasants, who gave their services gratuitously. And then, for two or three days, there followed a massacre that might be named the Capriot Vespers. From every lane the big yellow marguerites disappeared, the rebellious acanthus was struck down; the lithospermum, rosemary, honeysuckle, ivy, clematis, dog roses and wild stocks, were torn up, broken, trampled and carried away.

This continued until the cleaning of the roads was finished. The last to be uprooted, the most stubborn, were the *raje*. They have an ugly Latin name: *Smilax aspera*; they are a disgrace to the hedges; a relic of barbarism.

Also a relic of the Vergilian flora.

The pagan Romans did not uproot the smilax; they made garlands of it for the heads of the ephebi and the girls of the palestra of Capri, for the Bacchic dances and for the Saturnalia.

When the cleaning of the lanes is done properly—as it ought to be done and as it was done in Mayor Veruotto's time—the smilax entirely disappears from our hedges. So, a month later, did the bulk of the *macchia*, which, like the flowers, found its way into Vandalesio's oven.

One fine morning towards the end of April, the Mayor would arrive at the Town Hall rubbing his hands and say:

"It's done."

Both had been done, the cleaning of the lanes and the cleansing of the *macchia*. Then came the Summer heat and all that the Mayor and the baker had left undone was finished by the *Solleone*.

But the *Solleone* had an easier task; he found his job half-finished; he had nothing to do but burn up a few dried bushes and wisps of hay, and scorch the rocks.

After that the Mayor went shooting and the baker fishing; because as soon as the cleansing ended the communal holidays began, giving them a little time for rest and recuperation, and strength to face the labours of the Autumn session and the preparation of the annual budget.

The Autumn session was always postponed until December, and held in the following March.

It should have been held in September, but that is when quail-shooting opens and in October squid-fishing begins. Of course it might have been held at the beginning of November, but then there is All Souls' Day, and that would be unlucky. Besides, the woodcock may come at any moment.

In December it seemed hardly worth while, because at the beginning of the month the arrival of the bag-pipe players from the Abruzzi showed that the Christmas festivities were at hand.

Early in January the Sub-Prefect of Castellammare began to pester the Town Hall with unnecessary questions:

What about that Autumn Session? And the annual balance sheet?

If by the end of January—or at latest, early in February—they didn't submit the balance sheet! . . . And then came the threat of an official inquiry at the expense of the Commune. All very well for the Sub-Prefect; he was comfortable in his office at Castellammare with central heating . . . that is if Sub-Prefects are officially entitled to central heating.

No, it is only Prefects who have the right to central heating;



but the Sub-Prefect had a wood stove and was cosy enough. *He* hadn't ever tried to hold an Autumn Session in the Town Hall at Capri in January or February.

There was the hole in the wall, the hole that Cicione made when he let off the first picric bomb, with a draught whistling through it, and there was a leak in the roof through which water dripped . . .

The result was that the Autumn Session was held in March, at the beginning of Spring, and then we held it in a hurry because we had to think about cleaning the lanes, or, rather, the Sindaco Veruotto had to think about it, because it was always he who had to think of everything.

Now nobody thinks about *him*. He is forgotten; forgotten yet unforgettable.

He was the War-Mayor, as he liked to call himself, after the incident of the German submarine.

It makes one shiver to think of that German submarine.

If you should happen to meet Costanziello Veruotto out shooting in the Cala di Matromania where he goes to look for rock pigeons, just get him to tell you the story of the German submarine.

In these days he no longer wears the white suit which he affected when he was Mayor. As Mayor he always dressed in white—Capri wool in Winter and twill in Summer—and he liked you to notice it, because that white attire was symbolical: purity amidst the temptations of office. Everyone remarked on it, and the Canon had taught him to answer them in Latin.

When they said to him:

"All in white, *Cavalié*? A pure heart beneath the shirt of mail . . ."

He would interrupt:

"*Sicut lilium inter spinas.*" The thorns of office . . .

Now he is no longer dressed in white. He dresses as befits a sportman in yellow corduroy, and sets out to have a shot at the rock-pigeons which are birds "*nociferous*" as he says, to agriculture. When he is out shooting he always tells the story of the submarine.



It was in the early days of the war and Capri was short of flour. Somebody had to go to Naples, to interview the Food Commission, through which our local deputy was certain to see that Capri was well supplied. But going to Naples implied crossing the sea, and the sea was infested with German submarines.

An emergency session of the council was called. In a preliminary meeting of the majority, which was held in the Mayor's office, it had been decided that he should go to Naples in person. At the historic sitting which followed, the senior Councillor, after having dilated on the dangers of the situation, ended by asking if Cæsar would have passed the Rubicon of the Capri channel. A long silence followed, then a feeble voice was heard:

"Io quoque!"

The following morning Costanziello left Capri on the *Corriere di Salerno*, and the *Corriere di Salerno* was not torpedoed. Why not? It has never been known why it was not torpedoed.

If you wish to pay him a compliment and suggest that it was left alone because the Germans knew that he was on board, Costanziello demurs:

"The Germans? Not they! It was the big-wigs that they were looking for!"

Because the Germans wished to weaken the civil resistance.

And the German submarines?

One of them had been sighted two days before in the Straits of Messina, with its periscope pointing in the direction of Capri. After that nothing more was heard of it.

Later, two years after the war, Costanziello was made *Cavaliere Ufficiale*. Rather late in the day, but not too late to remind us that when the sea around Capri was infested with German submarines and the island had to be provided with flour, and everybody was asking who would brave the crossing, Costanziello replied, unanimously:

"Io quoque!"



THE CURATOR OF NATURAL BEAUTIES



IT was foreigners who first began to take the beauties of the island seriously. In 1885 Schreiter, a Polish Jew, who was at the head of the colony of German intellectuals founded the *Capriverschönerungsverein* in order to counteract the prevailing English influence. At that time the English were in possession. They had a Consular Agency, an Evangelical Church of Byzantine mosaic and imitation Venetian marble, and a Protestant Pastor, specially imported to deal with the recurrent religious fervour that attacks the English colony in the Spring. They had cornered the non-catholic cemetery, and among the living they ruled the roost with their Society for Making Life Pleasant and Useful.

The French, a few Russians, and a sprinkling of Eastern Europeans, although they were sniffed at by the English, could never bring themselves to support the Germans, and had entrenched themselves within the *Société des amis de Tibère*, a fraternity originally designed for the rehabilitation of Tiberius which had degenerated into a social club with an American Bar. Schreiter divined that the only interest common to these conflicting nationalities was the island's natural beauty, and united them within the fold of a reconstructed and internationalized *Capriverschönerungsverein*, which became the Society for the Embellishment of Capri, *La Société pour l'Enjolivement de Capri*, with equivalents in Esperanto, Volapuk and in every language celebrated on the wrappers of the world's most popular patent medicines.

As long as the programme remained a programme, all the



foreign residents were in agreement. They welcomed for instance, the proposals to neutralize—or rather to internationalize—old Spadaro, and to enlarge the entrance of the Blue Grotto. They agreed, again, that the opening of the Natural Arch should be widened (provided, always, that the widening was natural) in order that local painters might display the traditional lateen-rigged sailing boat in the aperture without any violation of their artistic consciences. From the archæological point of view the island must be brought completely up to date. The ruination of Tiberius's palace had—even for a ruin—gone too far, and unless the installation of hot sea-water baths were completed, the cult of Ulysses and the Sirens was in danger of being frozen out of the Piccola Marina in winter.

On these broad principles, I repeat, everyone was agreed. It was only when ideas showed signs of materialising that trouble began. The Germans, for instance, were determined that old Spadaro should be provided with a Tyrolese Costume. The French *amis de Tibère*, on the other hand, maintained and rightly maintained, that he should be clothed as the last descendant of those fishermen who, from father to son, remembered that an ancestor had heard it said by his grandfather that the uncle of another ancestor recollected that the name of the man who presented the lobster to Tiberius in the story told by Suetonius was *Spatarus*—which is doubtful seeing that Tiberius has been dead for nineteen centuries and the old Spadaros have only been going for seven. The Germans, again, insisted that the blocks of *opus reticulatum* used in the renovation of the ruins should be manufactured in Dessau by the *Ruineninstandhaltungsgesellschaft*, a firm that was ready to supply complete patent ruins, foundations, decorated walls, peristyles, colonnades—even tricliniums (in three sections) ginecei, cellars and cisterns.

As usual international jealousy blighted the fruition of Schreiter's ingenious proposals. Driven back from one position to another, he entrenched himself finally in the department that dealt with the naming of streets. The Via Hohenzollern,

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the Piazza Behring, Die Malerplatte, Der Loreleistrand, still bear witness to his zeal for the classics.

The Society for the Embellishment of Capri dragged out its miserable existence for thirty years. It ended, as everything ends at Capri, leaving the island as it found it. For several years her beauties were left to themselves. The Great War wiped out Schreiter's German street-names. A new national spirit arose in Italy. Thence came the Curator of Natural Beauties . . .

A propos: what happened to the Curator of Natural Beauties? He also vanished and left things as he had found them: the beauty of Capri, eternal and immutable. But what about the Curator?

At the Town-hall, where he had his office, he left a number of papers. Wherever he went he left papers. There are notes, tormented drafts of memoranda, improvised speeches, uncorrected galley-proofs, all fragments of a literature charged with high æsthetic potential. If one could only put these papers in order one could compose a volume: The Book of the Beauty of Capri—a kind of Beauty-parlour text-book with recipes for the *toilette* of the rocks, devices for brightening the blue of sea and the azure of skies, suggestions for freshening the green of vegetation and deepening the shade of grottoes.

Not only material beauties are dealt with in these papers. Among them there is a project for the creation of a World Centre of Intellectual Production at Capri. It is to be found in a little note-book that lies on the third shelf of the Communal Archives, between the report on the new drainage scheme and that on the Incidence of Typhoid Fever. Nobody has ever understood it. Nobody will ever know if the Curator himself was serious. The book is entitled *Gabbia delle Muse* (The Cage of the Muses) a title which might make one think that he was joking. It seems, however, that he was in deadly earnest. On the first page the title is explained. He proposes the institution of a Capri Museum resembling that which was founded at Alexandria by Alexander the Great. But while the activities of



Alexander's library were limited to the study of mathematics and philosophy, those of the Muses' Cage were designed to gather within its bars the whole gamut of expression of which the human spirit is capable. In a letter addressed to the Mayor, Costanziello Veruotto, the Curator defines his intentions:

"Your most illustrious Excellency will not be ignorant of the value of the researches of Aristotle, the happy findings of Euclid, nor of the enquiries made concerning the dimensions of the earth by Erastosthenes. These, together with the conic sections of Apollonius, the catalogue of the stars compiled by Hipparchus, the anatomical atlas of Herophilus, and the memoirs of their associate Archimedes, constitute a title of glory to those princes who lent them their patronage. The quick brain of your illustrious Excellency will realise in a moment the honour that would accrue to this commune from the foundation of an institute which might house and worthily entertain the commanding geniuses of our age, a school of research that might penetrate the ereptological problem inherent in the coloration of the blue lizard, the part played by Appenine Limestone in the hues of the Lithospermum, the alleged blindness of the Blue Grotto spider, the proportion of radium present in the rocks of Monte Solaro, the exact composition of this Capri air . . ."

There follows a list of other projected activities. Then:
" . . . in this way our island would be able to boast that it has placed among the names of those who have benefited humanity by the encouragement of Art and Science, beside the figures of Alexander the Great and the First and Second Ptolemies of Egypt, the name and figure of Costanziello, Mayor of Capri."

The fiery enthusiasm of this appeal can leave no doubt as to the seriousness of the Curator's proposals. That the Mayor also, was moved, can be judged by his reply, which the Curator has carefully pinned to the last page of his letter:

"Avete ragione voi. You're quite right. Pleased to associate myself with Alexander and Ptolemy."

Unfortunately the World-Centre of Intellectual Production was never produced. No doubt it was this failure that induced the Curator to devote himself to Pure Natural

Beauty. It is only by exploring the Communal Archives that one can realise the vastness of the Curator's æsthetic conception. The Manifesto of Mediterranean Beauty, which he issued from Capri on his first day of office, was the prime fertilizer of the soil from which a mythology of invented legends has newly sprung and fruited in this aged Southern land. The Manifesto, indeed, is not so much a personal compilation of the Curator's, as it is a vehicle for the expression of those imaginative yearnings and spiritual aspirations which have coloured the dreams of those who sought through him, and through Capri, the *Via del Sole*—the Way of the Sun.

His was the Golden Age of Capri, the age when Aesthetism was at its height; the island swarmed, it pullulated with choice spirits and rare souls.

For instance: a group of English Primitives—so primitive, almost, as to deserve the name of Pleistocene—who went about with baskets under their arms in which they carried the new poems that they wrote every day. Then there were the Parnassians, with Paul de Pommery at their head; the vorticist painters, with their spirally pleated trousers; the Psychoanalysts from Bolzano, the *Lederlose*, led by Weber, in their leatherless shoes; then all the religious reformers: pure Buddhists, Saraputtists, Dhamaputtists, and Sphereolites, followers of the cosmic doctrine of spirits wandering in rotatory spheres. All these were congregated in Capri, revolving within the orbit of the Curator, surrounding him. All these exponents of the most advanced tendencies in ethics, in philosophy and in art, some of which had originated on the island, contributed to the composition of the Curator's manifesto.

The Manifesto was a sort of Official Time-table for the Way of the Sun; even more—a time-table for the ways of the earth, the sea, and of the Southern sky.

"*The Sun*," it says, "*girdles this blessed isle with ardent walls. He who is gathered within its hallucinated zone fares best, caring no more for whys or whens or wheres.*"

"*Between the insurgent rock and the sacred olive is born a*

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world that is kin alike to fantasy and to reality. And this kinship is Paradise. Paradise was never lost. That which was lost was The Way of the Sun."

At that time all the intellectuals who foregathered at Capri were convinced that the Way of the Sun had been lost: as a matter of fact it had merely been mislaid; it was the Curator himself who re-discovered it, explored it, indicated its direction to all those who came to drift on Homer's storied sea—to those who sought—as the Manifesto puts it: "*through vivid plastic emotions the true solar intimacy.*"

This, to the surprise of Capri, was the reward that the Curator offered her: "*O, plamed in the lyric substance of a dream, Beauty is the reward of thy perfection. On thy untroubled strand is born again, each hour, the solar myth, the pagan soul, the meridional idea. And thy Beauty, which is our reward and thine, is sacred to us because it illuminates the essence of things . . . the azure essence of thy sea, thy sky and thy crags.*"

The azure of Capri! Do you know it? It simply tormented the Curator! He had discovered the Way of the Sun, the Way of the Sea, the Way of the Azure Sky. He had become the island's pilot, had hauled up the anchors that bound it to the bed-rock of reality and set sail toward a world in which reality dissolves and is confounded in fantasy. He followed the Azure Gleam . . .

The Curator even went so far as to compose a strange theory by which he explained the effects of Capri air, that air which condenses and becomes the essence of everything; the ultra-azure ray, the divine ray which has in it the colour of madness. No doubt he prepared a monograph—*Blue, in the Capri Landscape*; but the manuscript, if it were ever begun, must have been lost. In all his works, speeches and conversation the 'azure motive' persistently recurs. The pæans with which he celebrated his island were tone-poems of light enriched by a full orchestral setting in blue major. Among the papers preserved in the Municipal Archives is a sheet written in pencil which may have served as a rough draft for the projected monograph:

“Sea: fugue in azure, *accelerato*. Grottoes erupting roars of ultramine. Pelasgic deeps re-echo chromatic scale of blue. Dance-rhythms of azurine iridescence wavering on a watery surface smooth-polished by the sultry passage of scirocco. Minuet, by the gay, mad spirits of Mistral. *Finale*: fury of great sea-horses lashed indigo by the South-west, or turned to Prussian blue by the howling North.” Then, hurried notes upon the blue of the sky: “A great concave gong suspended above the island, emitting now a little tender air of blue dawns, virginal and tremulous, now a heroic march of blue, southern and implacable, then rising to a dirge of darker blue—the blue of venous blood curdled on the leaden clouds of tragic sunsets.”

Discursions on the ashen blue of the rocks; notes on the blue of lithogenetic plants; speculations on the nature of that azure ray which penetrates the soul and the brain, producing a psychic, azure pigmentation.

That pamphlet, as I have said, is missing. The series of the Curator's monographs begins with *Erpetological Variations in the Cerulean Lizard*. Once more that blue obsession! From the smaller reptiles he passed to the lithophagous plants: *Determining Factors in the coloration of Rosemary and Lithospermum*. Blue once again! Then, after *The Asphodel in the Landscape of Capri*, we find him engaged on an architectonic cycle: *On Chimneypots, The Pergola and the Garden, Classic Oil-jars, The Barrel-roof, The Ass-backed roof . . .* each and all in their relation to *The Landscape of Capri*.

But these purely æsthetic researches could not be expected to satisfy the Communal Administration, who had created the Curator's office for a more practical purpose. We know also that there were differences of opinion between the Curator and the Mayor on the subject of the island's æsthetic policy. Out of these differences arose the idea of that monumental work, *Myths in the Landscape of Capri, Opus XXXVII*. I say monumental; but, for all that, I am sure it has been heavily cut, because, instead of being—as the Curator originally defines it —“A revision of the legendary and mythical landscape of the Mediterranean” it ends by developing only one new myth: the



myth of the Tarantula Lestrigonica, which later became the Tarantula Capriota.

In Apollonius of Rhodes there is only one reference to this insect: *Est Tarantula Tyrrhenis* . . . The Tyrrhenians had a Tarantula. It was not much; but, after all, it was something, enough, at any rate, to stimulate the imagination when another fable, the jaded myth of the Sirens, which had been for a hundred years the island's exclusive property, began to be pirated by a syndicate that used it to advertise all the holiday resorts covered by their hotels, even those that had been built in second-rate seaside places like Ischia, Sorrento and Amalfi where ignorant foreigners were persuaded that they could still find Sirens. After that it was only natural that the Mayor should insist on having a purely local myth invented.

The Curator of Natural Beauties found it in that text of Apollonius: *Est Tarantula Tyrrhenis*. That was something to begin with. And wasn't there, in the Dionysius of Zenodotus of Trozene, an allusion to certain seductive dances traditionally handed down from the Teleboans? Apollonius of Rhodes, Zenodotus of Trozene . . . That was enough for the Curator.

The Mayor encouraged and flattered him:

"A man like you," he said, "so learned . . . Why, if you put yourself to it you could invent a dozen myths!"

The Curator put himself to it. He didn't make a dozen; but he made one that is worth all the others that he might have invented; he invented the myth of the Tarantulas, which is now one of our very oldest, one that has slowly and surely imbedded itself in the deepest of our prehistoric strata.

And the Sirens? In the works of the Curator these discredited creatures became common on all the shores of our two gulfs of Naples and Salerno. They are birds of evil omen, feathered monsters, notoriously immodest. As for their famous song—it is not, according to Rondolatus and Gottfried a *cantus luctuosus*? To strengthen his case, the Curator also found, in Lactantius Placidus, a Phœnician word, *ontenum*,

THE CURATOR OF NATURAL BEAUTIES

used to define the Sirens' *molestia abscondita*. Already, you see, the musty Homeric fable begins to reek of the Evil Eye.

Thus Capri got its new myth: the Tarantula, of which nobody had ever heard before—of which, indeed, nobody even now knows anything for certain except that they never existed and were, indubitably, the first inhabitants of the island who danced the tarantella to attract gaping foreigners. According to Hyginus—we have the Curator's word for it—there were originally three of them: Telxipia, Molpe, and Pisinoe. It was only after the transformation of their legs into one caudal appendage that they were degraded to the lower state of mere Sirens: Partenope, Leucosia and Lisia. The tarantulas danced in a mead of asphodel, the *Asphodelium*, originally mentioned in the Dionisiacs of Nonnus Panopolita and in the Incredibilia of Eusebius, who arbitrarily changed it later to a mound of bleached bones—the *Anthemoessa* of Homer—on which the Sirens disported themselves.

Why, then, were the Tarantulas changed into Sirens? And by whom? It is related (by the Curator, in his myths of the Capri Landscape) that Jupiter himself was struck by the grace which these dancers exhibited with a vigour that made them irresistible. And Jupiter, realising that the tide of Argonaut migration flowed past Capri and being precise in matters of (public) morality, modified the anatomy of these seducers in the interests of decency, thereby creating a new genus: the genus *Sirena*.

The renovation, or rather revision of the Myths, began and ended with the Tarantulas. They are, in fact, the last completed work of the Curator. When they were finished with, he conceived and endeavoured to launch a number of other projects. His papers are crammed full of original ideas, though few of his schemes materialised in a concrete shape.

There is, for example, his schedule of regulations relating to dress-reform. (*Costume in the Landscape of Capri*) which, if it had been adopted, would have solved the whole question of nude bathing on our shores. Only a few clauses remain; but they might properly be called the Magna Charta



of Propriety in Clothing. In them the clothing of visiting and resident foreigners is subordinated to the colour and plastic exigences of their surroundings and to the spiritual atmosphere of the native population. But the administrators evidently missed the true spirit of the Curator's proposals. The ethical content, the plastic substance of the regulations no doubt appeared to them an infringement of that liberty which is the basis of the Commune's sartorial politics so that *Costume in the Landscape of Capri* remains only another of the Curator's magnificent failures.

By no means the last . . . Who does not remember the Archæolithic Promenade? It was a great causeway; projected by the Curator, which would have connected all the scattered monuments of the island, providing the average visiting foreigner with a historical vista of more than ten thousand years in the short time at his disposal. At the Town Hall you may still see, in a frame, a complete tracing (scale 1:10,000) of the project. Leaving the Grotta dell' Arco, the dwelling of prehistoric cave-men, the road skirts Monte Solaro, passing our various reminders of the Stone-age, and debouches, just by the Paleolithic flint-factory, on to the Lestrygonian stairway which descends to the Phœnician hamlet of Aliano. Crossing the Greek colony at Palazzo a Mare, it hugs the Ephebeum of Augustus; then climbs alongside the funicular railway above Caligula's Myrrhine vase-works. For more than a third of its length this road goes winding through Tiberian ruins. It then turns toward mediæval Capri, and falls precipitously to the front door of the Villa occupied by the founder of Futurism. A measured distance of seven kilometres—from prehistoric man to Marinetti—which one can cover comfortably in two hours on foot and in three minutes by aeroplane.

The Archæolithic Promenade was never realised; but then, hardly any of the Curator's projects were, and his last proposal was, very rightly, rejected by the Town Council. It aimed at naturalising on Capri a flora that would protect the ruins from disintegration; and it is calculated that

in its first year of operation it would have absorbed the whole of the municipal balance. When the Council rejected it, the Curator began to make the experiments out of his own pocket. On the ruins of Tiberius's palace he planted, symbolically, *Fortuitus caespes*. On the site where the temple of Fortuna Primigenia should have stood, he sowed *Augurunculum*. He stripped all parasites from the ruins. On wall-tops of *opera testacea* above a carpet of musk, he began to plant the peoas, a kind of protective grass, and a graceful verbena called *Lippia Repens*. With *Lippia Repens*, the experiment ended. The papers which contained the entire project have been lost together with those relating to the naturalization of the Vergilian flora. Only one leaf remains: a list of 160 plants out of the 408 that were known to the Romans: a complete list of all the Capri plants mentioned by all known authors from Portius Cato (B.C. 149) to Moderatus Columella (A.D. 62).

What became of the Curator? He, also, has disappeared. On a card headed *Disjecta Membra* you will find the notes and reflections belonging to his last few months of office. Confused and fragmentary though they be, they make one realize the bitterness of his vain struggle. Did he, perhaps, like the legendary helmsman of Aeneas, like Palinurus, drunk with the beauty of starlight, steering his ship of fantasy between the coasts of Dream and of Reality—coasts between which the eternal dialogue of sea and sky is spoken above the tragic murmur of invisible winds—did he, like Palinurus, despair of reaching land? Did he, like Palinurus, fall overboard in his sleep? Did he fall overboard . . . or was he thrown there? It is certain that he never reached the shore of his desire, for his masterpiece, *Man, in the Landscape of Capri*, remained unwritten.

Among his papers you may find the skeleton of a plan of biological research which begins with the island's geomorphological foundations, examines the first traces of vegetable and animal life, (*Elephas antiquus Ursus spelaeus*, etc.) proceeds in the course of geological time, to the age of myths, and,



from the myths, with one bold leap over recorded history, ends on a note of troubled interrogation: *Homo caprearum novus???*

It will be remembered that toward the end of his term of office a sad vision arrived to disturb his spirit. One day, by some mistake, a normal man landed on Capri. The Curator himself called the attention of the townspeople to the fact that he was out of keeping with the Capri landscape, out of the picture—almost, as you might say, *fuori squadra*—out of line.

Fuorisquadro, as the citizens baptized that strange visitor, did not remain for more than a few hours on the island and was soon forgotten. Not, however, by the Curator. From that moment the possibility of this terrible visitation being repeated never left his mind. Then, suddenly, he, too, disappeared. And nobody missed him.

All that is left of him to-day is the vast accumulation of materials at which, like a man engrossed in a Chinese puzzle, he laboured incessantly, trying to put into one big box—*The Landscape of Capri*—all the conceits and figments and creations of an imagination sick with beauty. One by one the little boxes fitted into each other. Within these he seems to have been able to store the materials of his dreams; the sea, the sky, the rocks . . . houses and porticoes and roofs; all the rarer natural productions of the island, all its imaginative heritage of myth and legend and tradition.

Then, man . . .

The Capri man would also have had his place, and the highest place of all, in the box-like architecture of his fancy. But the appearance of that normal man had caused the entire edifice to collapse.

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It was only after his disappearance that it came to be known that, in a strict and legal sense, the office of Curator of Natural Beauties had never existed, and that the nomination made by the town-council was not valid. The Sub-prefect had refused to ratify it; and when, two years after the Curator's disappearance, the papers were sent back without the necess-

ary *visa*, one even began to doubt if the Curator had ever existed. All the same, the documents concerning his nomination are still preserved in the archives among the papers relating to the Curatorship which, although it never existed, was in operation for two years. The truth of the whole matter is this. Mayor Veruotto was responsible for the original idea of a Curatorship. It was he who suggested it to Canonico Don Gaudenzio Battisterio. The Canonico spoke about it vaguely at the Town Hall, making it understood that it would be wise to provide for the interests of that Beauty by which the islanders so greatly profited. The Secretary, Rondelli, just then arrived from Piacenza, prepared the famous "Report on the Necessity of Disciplining the Meridional Beauty of the Island." The whole matter was clearly explained to the Mayor, who, believing that it had something to do with felling trees, fathered the proposal and brought it before the council. The Council approved it, at one meeting, by a first and second reading, and, at the same meeting, the Curator was nominated. The minutes concerned were then mislaid among some others of equal urgency. How they ever got to the sub-prefecture and back again into the archives nobody knows. Some people think this was done out of spite by an employee who, having found them, sent them on to the sub-prefect for approval. He happened to be the owner of a stone-pine, which he wanted to cut down and use for firewood; instead of which it was used as material for one of the Curator's monographs: *The Umbrella Pine in the Landscape of Capri*, and proposed, by him, for special protection as a National Monument. In any case, as soon as the minutes reached him, the Sub-prefect forbade the institution of a Curatorship of Natural Beauty, and, as I've said, the Curator, who never had legitimate existence, has also disappeared; so that now the Natural Beauties of Capri are abandoned to their own devices, and, what is worse, nobody is aware of it.

Nobody is even aware that Capri once had a Curator of Natural Beauties . . .

And that is what the Natural Beauty of Capri really is.



OLD SPADARO



WHEN foreigners first see old Spadaro waiting so cheerfully to have his photograph taken, posing so naturally, as to the manner born, in his characteristic "picturesque old fisherman's" costume, with the pipe, the beard, and the hair which he has copied exactly from all the oil paintings and water colours, from all the hand-painted tambourines, from all the lids of all the inlaid Sorrento boxes, from all the pictures woven in towels, from all the coloured postcards—when foreigners see him, I say, they make a monstrous mistake: they take him for a live man. But the greater marvel is this: the imitation is so perfect, that Spadaro himself believes in it too.

As a matter of fact Spadaro does not exist. Apart from Tiberius, Spadaro is the best myth that Capri has ever produced. You need only approach him to persuade yourself that he is real; the illusion is complete. What is more, since the other one was melted in the fire that destroyed Mme. Tus-saud's, he is the only remaining example of the "picturesque old Capri Fisherman." But although you may approach Spadaro, to see if he is real, you are forbidden to touch him because you might damage him; you are not even allowed to pull his beard, because the tow might come uncurled. At the most you may assure yourself, by means of a moistened finger-tip, that the tan on the old sea dog's cheeks does not come off. Be comforted, the colour is pre-war and fast.

Of course Spadaro can talk. If, knowing, or pretending to believe, that he is really the oldest sailor on the island, you care to ask his opinion of the weather, he will swing his arm with



the action of a universal joint, remove the pipe from his mouth, spit naturally, and say: "*Bafuogno*."

The *bafuogno* is the private wind of the Spadaro family which from time immemorial, or at least for the last twenty years, has regularly produced the island's oldest and most picturesque fishermen.

Latterly the Spadaros have extended their lineage backward into the days of Tiberius. It is within the bounds of possibility that an ancestor of the grandfather of the present Spadaro was actually the fisherman who brought the mullet to Tiberius and had his face scraped with the lobster for his pains. You remember, Suetonius vouches for it: *locusta quoque lacerari os imperavit*.

But long before the tradition of the Picturesque Old Fisherman began there was that of the Old Prisoner in the Picturesque Prison and that of the Picturesque Old Hunter. Indeed, the fortunes of the family began with the Old Hunter who was the grandfather or the great-grandfather of the present Old Spadaro and flourished in the days of Mr. Gong.

Mr. Gong's real name was Mac Gong, but having quarrelled with the British aristocracy, whom he had served in the capacity of land-agent to an English peer, he dropped the Mac and called himself simply Mr. Gong. Incidentally, he had married his noble employer's wife, who being ill, came with him to the island hoping to derive benefit from our Capri air; but the poor lady, who in England had merely suffered from one mild attack of bigamy, at Capri went from bad to worse and contracted chronic polygamy. As a result of this Mr. Gong dedicated himself to shooting and took, as gillie, the old Spadaro of his day. The two would set out together early every morning; Mr. Gong with the cartridge belt and game bag full of provisions for the day, Spadaro with the gun and a "piretto" of wine. They went to find a place for shooting woodcock.

Now the woodcock is another Capri tradition. There is a recognised season for woodcock shooting, from the end of October to the beginning of January; but one can also poach from February to October, because at that time of year the



birds do not usually appear. It is unusual for them to appear during the woodcock season either; but people go shooting just the same and wait patiently for the woodcock to arrive. So, every morning, Mr. Gong and Spadaro went up the mountain and waited, and passed the time in eating the provisions and emptying the piretto. Toward evening they came back into the town; Mr. Gong seated himself at a table in the Caffé d'Europa, and Don Antonio Scuotto, the proprietor of the café himself served Mr. Gong with his bottle of whisky. Spadaro, near by, studied the weather.

Gradually all the sportsmen of the island gathered round Mr. Gong to hear the latest scandals of the English aristocracy.

As soon as the woodcock season drew near, in November, or even at the end of October, Mr. Gong began to explain how woodcock should be cooked. But the sportsmen at that time were too distracted or preoccupied to listen. They kept their eyes glued on Spadaro who calmly sniffed at the air, so as not to rouse their hopes too violently, and when they asked him what wind it was and from what quarter it blew, he would reply: "*Bafuogno!*"

It was he who first discovered this *bafuogno*, which has since become the Spadaro family wind, and is at present the only wind officially recognised by the local authorities. The *bafuogno* is a cross between the true scirocco and the foul tramontana. In those days, when the meteorology of the island was still in its infancy, neither the origin, nor the direction, nor the effect of the *bafuogno* were known. Now that it has become the prevailing wind, one can recognise it at once. One need only scrutinise the horizon from the terrace of the Funicular and look at the sky and watch the plume of Vesuvius:

The swallows fly high: wisps of cloud detach themselves and the air is transparent.

Bafuogno. That means that it will be fine.

The sunrise is red, the clouds huddle together. Hearing is intensified and the sparrows fly low in restless circles.

Bafuogno. That indicates that a storm is brewing.

THAT CAPRI AIR



Bafuogno . . . always *bafuogno*.

The *bafuogno* is the characteristic Capri wind; it has become perpetually endemic; in intensity it varies between the trade and the typhoon, and blows from every point of the compass in turn.

With the *bafuogno* there is always the probability of fine weather, but when the *bafuogno* blows one must be careful, because, if the weather should break, a storm may come; or a high wind; or rain and wind all together; sometimes an intense cold, sometimes suffocating heat.

It all depends from which quarter the *bafuogno* is blowing, because it either blows from every direction or does not blow at all.

It is a wind that is enigmatic and inexact; it is a wind and it is not a wind. Perhaps is it merely a state of mind, the state of mind of the Capri climate.

But this is the modern theory. In the days of Mr. Gong's Spadaro the nature of the *bafuogno* was so imperfectly understood that it hung over the island as a continuous threat. It was Spadaro himself who solved its mystery. He began to make subtle distinctions. He discovered that even with *bafuogno* woodcock could appear. Sometimes when people questioned him, he would moisten his finger, raise his hand, and by a sensation of coolness which was perceptible only to himself, arrive at a decision: "A Woodcock wind!" He could feel the woodcock twenty miles away.

After several years practice with Mr. Gong, Old Spadaro could even distinguish the approach of quails. Nowadays that would not seem remarkable. Nowadays we can all distinguish the approach of quails; from April until the end of May the air is so impregnated with the scent of them that it goes to our heads. In those two months we can think of nothing else. The hunting instinct is developed in direct proportion with the scarcity of game. Only a few weeks ago a mason, working on a scaffolding, who saw the shadow of a bird projected on the wall in front of him, fell to the ground, and was picked up half dead, with emotion and concussion.



But in the days of the Old Hunter Spadaro the scent of quails was scarcely worth noticing. The woodcock was our only rarity.

Every evening all the local sportsmen would gather round Mr. Gong in the café on the Piazza, waiting. . . .

With the West wind and the East, and especially with the *bafuogno* woodcock might possibly—but would not probably—appear. Sometimes they were not seen until December. But with the first snap of cold, one fine day while all the sportsmen were listening to Mr. Gong's stories, Old Spadaro would become restless. He would rise and go to look at the sea, the sky the horizon, and when he could contain himself no longer, he would return and say:

“A woodcock wind!”

Confusion followed; all the sportsmen slunk away to fill cartridges, without even paying for their drinks.

Mr. Gong was left all alone. Then he would call Don Antonio Scuotto, the proprietor of the café:

“Don Antonio, do you know how to hang woodcock?”

“Yes, milord!”

Don Antonio said yes in order that Mr. Gong might not explain it to him again. But that was no good. For the hundredth time Mr. Gong instructed him in the English method of hanging woodcock.

You take a page of the *Morning Post*—the wife of the English peer, who had married Mr. Gong, was a subscriber to the *Morning Post*—you take a page of any newspaper, but preferably of the *Morning Post*, because the paper is conservative, you wrap your woodcock in it, you tie his legs and hang him to a nail. The rest is obvious. When the woodcock falls, of its own weight. . . .

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When Mr. Gong died he left nothing but the gun, the *piretto* and the Picturesque Old Hunter's costume to Spadaro; it was a Scotch gillie's costume, with a blue, green and red kilt

THAT CAPRI AIR



made of the tartan of the clan MacGong. Old Spadaro had always kicked at the kilt, for which he substituted Capri woollen trousers. Then, gradually, without Mr. Gong knowing it, he adopted a blue linen shirt and a red woollen belt, until, at the time of Mr. Gong's decease nothing was left of the gillie's costume but the red tam o'shanter which Old Spadaro wears to this day. It must have been twenty or thirty years ago—but who remembers it now?—that the Old Hunter Spadaro became a Picturesque Old Fisherman, It happened this way. One day old Spadaro was smoking his pipe on the piazza, leaning over the wall, gazing seaward, and sniffing the air for the scent of woodcock—which is all that we get of them in these days—when a foreigner accosted him and consulted him about the weather. "*Bafuogno*," Spadaro answered absent-mindedly.

It was not *bafuogno*, it was tramontana; but that *bafuogno* made Spadaro's fortune. The foreigner repeated:

"*Bafuogno*?" Then fishing's off . . . you fishermen will be out of a job?

Fisherman . . . Why not? It was an idea . . . The foreigner gave him half a lira, and a fill of English tobacco, and took his photograph.

To this day Spadaro still smokes nothing but Navy Cut.

Within a year he had acquired the beard of the Picturesque Old Fisherman.

* * * * *

Now he has become a tradition, and woe to all who touch him!

When a short while ago, we heard that the Hospital for Chronic Invalids was arranging with Spadaro to become a Chronic Invalid for a few hours a day, during those very hours in which the rush of visitors arrives, our world almost came to an end. The Steamship Company let it be understood that it would suspend the service of the steamer which brings over Americans for the express purpose of photographing Spadaro; the Eastman Company rightly threatened the Town

OLD SPADARO



Council with an action for damages, because they had arranged that Spadaro should only be photographed with a Kodak in the space reserved by the company on the Piazza; the painters demanded that the Ministry of Fine Arts should enforce the existing law for the protection of the landscape.

But the agitation ceased when the public realised exactly how the production of old Spadaros was organised.

At one time the career was hereditary and was regarded as the absolute right of the first-born; but when the grandson of the first old Spadaro fell ill with meningitis and almost died, a reserve supply was formed. They began to rear two or three at a time as a precaution.

As soon as the little Spadaros have cut their milk teeth, they take them out of their swaddling clothes and teach them to articulate the first syllables: *Ma-ma . . . ba . . . ba-fuogno!*

At three or four they already know how to pose for the Kodak, when they are five they learn how to ask for alms with a movement of the hand which indicates that the fishing is bad; then they take a course of tarantella lessons with pretty little Carmelinas, and when they are rather older their grandfather takes them with him to accustom them to the less important viewpoints frequented by foreigners. It is only when they come of age that they wear the complete family costume.

The industry is organised on a small scale and only serves for local needs. But now that exportation has begun, there are whispers of mass-production, and in a few years every health resort or watering-place will be able to procure a Picturesque Old Sailor, in costume (red tam o'shanter, complete with pipe and natural beard) for a song.

There is only one difficulty in exporting them. These Picturesque Old Fishermen suffer from sea sickness.





TIMBERIO



TIMBERIO is the Capri Tiberius. As a historical figure he is identical with the Roman Tiberius: Claudius Nero Tiberius, son of Livia and stepson of Augustus, the most interesting figure who appeared on the stage of the Western world between the years B.C. 31 and A.D. 476, from Cæsar Octavius Augustus to Romulus Augustulus.

Modern historians have raised him gently from that sink of vice which is the Cæsarian Epoch; they have shaken him, disinfected him, deodorised him—dispelling the taint of classic tyranny. Washed, rinsed and bleached in the white light of criticism, they present him spruce and rehabilitated. For this reason Tiberius has ceased to be interesting; he resembles all the other rehabilitated tyrants. It must be noted that in these pages the Capri Tiberius, in other words Timberio, is not presented as an historical figure, but as a myth; the myth invented by Bella Carmelina, perfected by Old Spadaro, completed by guides and hotel-porters, and honoured by all the islanders as the first and greatest benefactor of Capri.

An international society, *la Société des Amis de Tibère*, was once formed expressly for the purpose of perpetuating this cult. There was, until a short time ago, a Mayor who mentioned him in all his speeches; "Our Beloved Sovereign," he called him. It was that Mayor who carried in the Town Council a proposal that the 16th of March, the anniversary of our Beloved Sovereign's death, should be declared a public holiday at Capri. Unfortunately the Government objected. So the feast is now celebrated privately, with a funeral banquet at Costantina's the evening after the Ides of March. Everybody



knows that this is only a pretence, because Tiberius is not dead; we only pretend that he is dead to justify the banquet. It is just about the middle of March that the first quails arrive, the "marzaiole" of which our Beloved Sovereign was so very fond; also the first lobsters appear on the market and the *ravioli* season is officially opened.

Then, to make the illusion that Tiberius is dead more real, his veiled statue is placed on the dining-table. It is an indifferent copy in plaster-of-Paris of a bust by Vitellius which is in the Bargello in Florence, or perhaps in the Uffizi, and represents the depraved Tiberius of tradition. His head is wreathed with smilax, the Bacchanalian ivy, and between the folds of the mourning veil the little red bunches clustering around the ear of Tiberius give him a look of evil cunning as if he were amused to know that he is not really dead, and that the feast is merely a pretence. He is a living myth; he was purposely invented for the delectation of foreigners. Historically he would be an inconceivable, unthinkable and impossible type; he never existed, nor could he have existed; he is in short, the real Tiberius, our Tiberius. The other, the Roman one, Claudius Nero Tiberius Cæsar, is dead; irrevocably, unequivocally dead. One can be sure of it, though nobody knows exactly how he died; or rather, at the time of his death nobody knew, because none of his contemporaries, such as Seneca, tell us about it. It was only a century or two after his death that Tacitus and Suetonius began to be indiscreet, and from that time until our days, especially *in* our days, we have discovered all the details of his death. We know now that Tiberius actually died on the day on which his death is officially celebrated at Capri, the day after the Ides of March. He might have died precisely on the Ides of March, the 15th, if Julius Cæsar had not already chosen that day to be stabbed in the Curia. So, to avoid confusion, Tiberius died on the 16th, gently suffocated by his relations, in the triclinium of Lucius Lucullus at Cape Misenum, in the year 790 of Rome, the twenty third of his reign and MDCCCLXXXV before the New Era in Italy.



At this sad ceremony, prepared with real imperial pomp, only near relations and intimate friends were present: Caius Caligula and Drusilla for the family; Nevius Sartorius Macro, Prefect of the Pretorians; Gennius Rusticus, Senator and Provost of the Commentaries of the Senate.

Caricles, physician and surgeon, rendered first aid. When he saw that Caligula and Drusilla could not manage to smother him with an eiderdown, he also lent a hand. Murmuring *Ave Cæsar!* he added his own weight to theirs. Then he wrote the death certificate: *cataleptic syncope*.

Just at the wrong moment, at the point when they were about to finish him, the Architriclinio opened the door of the triclinium without even saying "Excuse me!" The Architriclinio saw what was happening and retired discreetly; but within a few hours he was suppressed.

Everybody around Tiberius had been in excellent humour that evening. The Emperor had given a supper to celebrate his latest exploit; the killing of a wild boar with a javelin by his own sacred hands.

The wild boar had been roasted in its hide, but carefully shaved, because Tiberius detested crackling with bristles on it; it was served with a sauce of myrtles and juniper berries and washed down with a generous supply of old wine from the Capri vineyard of Juno Moneta, which is now cultivated by Carlo Siviero, the painter.

Whilst Tiberius's body was still warm, Drusilla—it takes the delicacy of a woman to think of things like that—with feminine dexterity slipped off the imperial signet.

—"Before he goes stiff"—said Drusilla to Caligula thoughtfully reclining on a purple lounge near the bier where the corpse was lying. Then with her usual forethought, she whispered in his ear:

—"One can always say that Macro has done it."

Caligula tried the ring which was too large for the little finger and too tight for the third, and thought that it could easily be altered. Then he began to speculate on the names that he could adopt on his succession: "Caius—Cæsar—



Augustus—Germanicus . . . Drusilla, art thou listening?"—Then louder in her ear: "Father of the Armies . . . Son of the Legions . . . " and he kissed her on the nape of the neck.

Drusilla shivered and looked at the corpse which was becoming cold and stiff, the face was swelling and began to resemble the head on the onyx cameo in the Louvre, which latterly has been held to be the best portrait of Tiberius, but which is perhaps only the profile of Claudius. Unable to bear that spectacle any longer, the daughter of Agrippina and Germanicus threw a sweat-rag over the deformed face of the Emperor. Trembling she clutched Caligula's arm and leant on it.

"Macro!"—Caligula called, and Macro who at the moment was returning through the folding-doors of the auditorium approached, and after having heard what the heir whispered in his ear, replied:

"It is done, I have thought of everything . . . " Then under his voice, as if speaking to himself, he added "It's always *I* who have to think of everything!"

As a matter of fact he had already given instructions for the suppression of the indiscreet Architriclinio and had sent off the obituary notices and the proclamation relating to the new Emperor's accession.

Soldiers and members of the household began to enter, followed by the Court and officials, who were preceded by a Vexilliferus.

During his trip to Campania the Emperor had been accompanied by a troop of ephebi and girls from the gymnasium at Capri, and the Chief Instructor introduced them into the hall to salute the body.

Then came Drusilla's maids, led by a Flabellifera. They advanced and prostrated themselves around the bier. Gradually the hall filled with notaries, door-keepers, centurions, freedmen, slaves and gymnasts. When Caligula saw around him a sufficient number of people to make it worth his while to try out an imperial gesture, one of the effects that he had already promised himself, he turned to the Prefect of the

TIMBERIO



Pretorians and referred to the title which he had assumed. Drusilla, dreamily repeated under her voice Caligula's words, "Emperor . . . Father of the Armies . . . Son of the Legions . . . Pontifex Maximus . . ."

* * * * *

Eighteen centuries after this Timberio was born in Capri. We say eighteen centuries, but nobody knows exactly; perhaps it is a little less. We know that the Tiberius of to-day is due to Bella Carmelina. But to which of them? For the last quarter of a century, perhaps for the last century, a Bella Carmelina has danced the tarantella on the "ruins of Tiberius" at the Villa of Jupiter. But perhaps, half a century ago, a century ago, it was her mother or even her grandmother who danced there. The Belle Carmeline follow the same laws as the Old Spadaros; their office is hereditary, and they hold it until a great age. Some years ago at Monte Tiberio, where the family has lived for centuries, a certain Bella Carmelina died at the age of 103; they are a long-lived race and have danced the tarantella from time immemorial. Norbert Hadrawa, in the archæological excavations which he made at the Villa Jovis in 1806, found a fossil thigh-bone abnormally developed in the great trochanter. It is believed that this bone may have formed part of the anatomy of a very ancient dancer. Perhaps the tarantella is atavistic in Carmelina's family.

All that is known for certain, however, is that Timberio was invented later than the discovery of the Blue Grotto. Addison, who visited the island in the eighteenth century mentions a *Tiberius*, but he is probably alluding to the Roman one. In Sir C. Hoare's Classical Tour (1819) no Bella Carmelina is mentioned; but Hoare was, after all, a superficial observer. As I have said already Timberio should not be looked at in the clear light of history; one must consider his present state as embryonic, and regard him as a myth in process of gestation. Of all the Capri myths he is the most unreal; of all the Capri myths the most alive. He is certainly



more alive than Oscar Westergard who, as a solar myth, has a limited function; he is more alive than Weber (though Weber, too, is unreal); or than Miradois, who is really a fraud. For Westergard, Weber, Miradois, . . . and as many other unreal beings as you can collect in Capri, have something of the visible, the palpable, the perceptible and conceivable about them. But Timberio is a pure product of fantasy, the least true, the most unthinkable; he is the Absolute Unreal and, therefore, more alive than any other Capri type. As yet he is young, but only give him time and all the history, that is all the mythology of Capri, will have to be re-written. For the present the tradition is only in the making.

If you climb to Santa Maria del Soccorso, where stands the hermitage of Beato Consalvo da Capri, it is just possible that you may be shown the tomb of that illustrious recluse. A few of the parchments on which the most helpful of his maxims were inscribed are preserved there, but in all probability they are not originals.

When they had to exhume his body for the ceremony of beatification, the skeleton could not be found: the tomb had been rifled . . .

They prodded all around the ruins, and under a wall of *opus reticulatum* they found a single thigh bone, calcined and petrified. Unfortunately that bone was not enough. As a matter of fact it was on account of that bone that the ceremony was interrupted. The *Postulator causae* established the fact that that thigh bone had worked miracles; it had been seen to move and shake itself with a noise of castanets; but, in the pleadings against Consalvo's beatification, which are still preserved, it was objected not only that the bone was insufficient as a relic but also that it had something abnormal about it. It was exaggeratedly developed in the region of the hip. For myself, I am convinced that they were dealing with the thigh-bone of a fossil Bella Carmelina. In any case Consalvo was not beatified, although he is still called Beato Consalvo da Capri. At S.M. del Soccorso he is almost forgotten, and since Bella Carmelina opened her *buvette*, for red and white wine, the site of his



hermitage is always known as Monte Tiberius, and the *buvette* itself is now called the *Salto di Tiberio*, with "entrance free" in all languages.

If ever you should climb up to Monte Tiberio do not fail to visit that *buvette*; within those walls the Tiberian tradition was born. Although the entrance is free you are not obliged to drink the wine; but even if you are a prohibitionist it is quite worth while tasting—particularly the white. This is the only place where you can find the *Lachrima Tiberii*. If you do not drink, take at least two or three stones—there is an assortment on the little wall above the precipice. When you ask the price, they will tell you "*Fate a vostro piacere*," because you are not obliged to pay for the pebbles; but if you offer them a lira they will give you five or six and help you to select the roundest.

It is better not to go to Monte Tiberio on a day when there is a crowd. If there are not many people, and you care to wait a little, Carmelina herself will come and explain to you all the Tiberian atrocities.

Bella Carmelina begins with the *Salto*. The *Buvette* at the Salto di Tiberio is hers. What did Timberio do? It has actually been written down in books, and Don Venanzio, the chaplain of the hermitage, has read it all in Latin: Timberio threw from the Salto all those who came up to the Villa Jovis; and that is why it is called the Salto do Tiberio. He threw slaves, pretorians, noble guards, people of every class, civil or military, male or female, without distinction. Carmelina can show you the exact spot from where Lucilla was hurled into space. At any rate it was near this spot that the celebrated bas-relief now kept in the Naples Museum was found: *Tiberius with his concubine on horseback, led by a winged genie*. That was his method: as soon as he felt *gené* by the concubine he had her thrown over the Salto.

Did he not do the same with Thrasyllus?

Trasillo—Carmelina explains—was a great mathematician. It is a fact that he filled the pavements of the imperial villas with geometrical decorations, triangles, rhomboids, squares . . .



Then he was promoted astrologer—and that was why he was called *Trasillo*, because, as Provost to the Winds, it was his business to predict the “*trasito*” of the quails by observations on the direction of the wind.

You may be doubtful about the etymology but almost all the Tiberian tradition is based on etymology of this kind. Bella Carmelina has a library of local best-sellers—Tacitus, Suetonius, Mangoni and Douglas (she calls them the “*classichi*”) in which, if you have doubts, you can check the truth of her assertions:

“*Trasillo?* . . . from *trasito*.”

Fortunately she has a friend, Canonico Don Venanzio Altena, the chaplain, who has marked her “*classichi*” and made marginal notes in them. Carmelina takes up Mangoni, opens it and points with her finger to a certain page:

“*Transitus cuturnicum*,” you read, at the side, in Don Venanzio’s note: “*Trasito* of the quails.”

It is certain that even under Tiberius the passage of migratory quails must have been a determining factor in the life of the island and that their advent required the employment of an astrologer no less experienced than old Spadaro. Of course, in those days, the profession was much more precarious. Tiberius, who had a passion for variety, must have been irritated every time he asked Thrasyllus what the weather was like, and Thrasyllus replied:

“*Bafuogno*, your Majesty!”

The *bafuogno* ends by getting on one’s nerves: Thrasyllus ended by getting on the nerves of Tiberius: he ended, in other words, at the bottom of the *Salto*.

Carmelina can show you a complete list of all the highly placed personages who ended at the bottom of the *Salto*: Crispina—but Crispina was fished up again, and interred at the Grande Marina, where her sarcophagus may still be seen—Sejanus, Prefect of the Pretorium—Poppea, Messalina, Agrippina . . . ladies who had got themselves talked about. For Tiberius was very strict about morals.



The story of the *Salto* and of all the people who were hurled over it leaves you a little perplexed. You can hardly believe that a tyrant, however much a tyrant, could, out of sheer brutality . . .

But it wasn't only brutality: there were also the lampreys. Tiberius, who had all the vices, not excluding those of the stomach, had a passion for lampreys, and feed them on human flesh to fatten them. If you lean over the *Salto* and look down on the appalling rocks below, you will realise that the basin into which the abyss descends might have been made on purpose for keeping lampreys; it is a sort of natural marine stewpond. Moreover Krupp has proved it. Krupp, came to Capri with his marine-biological laboratory, expressly to solve the problem of the biogenesis of the lamprey. It was he who discovered the larva of the lamprey in the Mediterranean. Can you guess where? Under the *Salto di Tiberio*! Carmelina knows the story of Krupp and the larva of the lamprey; she knows all the history of Tiberius. If she thinks that you are not convinced by her story of the *Salto* she will merely say:

"Try it for yourself!"

The proposal makes you shiver, because at first you do not understand, but she is only suggesting that you do what all foreigners who go to Monte Tiberio do: they try it for themselves . . . with stones. Now you will understand what those heaps of pebbles on the parapet of the *Salto* are for. Everybody wants to feel the thrill of throwing a stone into the abyss . . .

"Try" —says Carmelina—"to make a stone fall in the sea." You cannot do it, and this is Carmelina's proof. Nobody has ever been able to do it, and Bella Carmelina, triumphant, convinces herself that you are convinced that Tiberius *did* succeed in throwing into the sea slaves, concubines and other well-connected people.

A century or a century and a half ago, before the discovery of the Blue Grotto, before the exploitation of the tourist-traffic began, the first archæological excavations were made at Monte Tiberio. The Governor of the island, Giuseppe Maria



Secondo, and after him Giraldi and Hadrawa, Romanelli, Feola and other depressing antiquarians began to grope amongst the debris of Imperial Rome. In those days the island was scattered with ruins, still majestic beneath the burden of their eighteen centuries. Masses of fallen columns littered the fields; beneath their surface lay a hard-pan of mosaic and tessellated marble which the roots of the vines could scarcely penetrate. On the tops of the hills, on rocky platforms levelled by the Roman chisel, were traces of temples and streets, the vertebræ of aqueducts, foundations of water tanks faced with the hard cement of Augustan builders. Lost amid the undergrowth lay a wealth of sculptured fragments; pieces of statuary, mutilated torsi, fragments of granite vases, undamaged thresholds, inscribed tablets and shattered friezes. The roof of the grotto dell'Arsenale still sparkled like the nave of a Byzantine basilica with many-coloured mosaics of semi-precious stones, and on its sandy floor there were strewn the splinters of that serving-dish of cameo glass that shines to-day in the Metropolitan Museum.

If only this rubbish had been collected, Capri to-day would be an artistic necropolis, a cemetery of Tiberian lumber. Fortunately it was all destroyed: foreigners and islanders vied with each other in curio-hunting, and now nothing remains but a ruin of the Augusto-Tiberian ruins—just enough of them to make a background for the figure of Tiberius—the Tiberius of Capri, who has become the property of Bella Carmelina.

Carmelina's *buvette* stands where his palace stood, and for her Tiberius's palace has no secrets. She will show you the most cunningly-concealed hiding places, the cellar (*cella vinaria*) the cisterns, the dining-hall, the drawing-room; she will point to the places where these chambers stood and as she unfolds her story she will populate them with personages of the Tiberian legend—while you, rebuilding in your mind that portentous structure, adorn it with associations drawn from the fables of Tacitus and Suetonius and Carmelina's legend. Because Carmelina, unconsciously, by virtue of that mythogen-



etic faculty which is an attribute of all our race, is in the tradition of Tacitus and Suetonius; and has taken her place, unwittingly, amongst the classics. Her Tiberius is the *princeps arcem* of which Pliny gives us a lurid cinematographic vision; a mad tyrant, cowardly, cruel, satiated with every wickedness, who found a last fillip for his sadic appetite in the spectacle of slaves, freedmen, centurians, concubines, empresses . . . hurled into space from the "Salto" over the Capri sea. Hers is the Tiberius of Dio Cassius who, with Hellenistic charm disseminates the gossip of an earlier Capri, of the Capri dear to Augustus, and embroiders with its naughtiness the scandal of Tiberius's orgy. Hers is the Tiberius-Myth; not the jaded, mildewed myth of dusty texts, but a myth fantastic and living; a myth brought up-to-date.

From her little library of classics, annotated and underlined by Canonico Don Venanzio Altena who knows Latin, Carmelina enriches and substantiates her knowledge. She will show you the factory of the *Spintrix* in Tiberius's Palace. So you may be sure that that is the place where the factory of the *Spintrix* stood. She assures you that *Spintrix* are still to be found; that one was excavated a few days ago; but it is all encrusted with a green patina, so fortunately, you cannot distinguish anatomical details. Are you incredulous? She goes to her little library, takes up Ovid and opens it where a reference has been marked by the Canonico:

"Read it, Signore!"

And crossing herself, she shows you the passage in Ovid:

Sic quae concubitus varios Venerisque figuras exprimat . . .

Carmelina embroiders her traditions of Tiberius day by day, hour by hour; she adapts them to all nationalities. To the English she makes him pass for a sort of tyrant, more or less presbyterian; depraved, yes, and rotten with vice, but not indecorous. For the French she has a Tiberius more *canaille*, a type of *vieux marcheur*, malicious, idle, arrogant. She adapts him to the special tastes of all her visitors. She understands in a flash with whom she has to deal. Behold a man with gold rimmed spectacles who is cramming his pockets with bits of



mosaic and goes poking about the ruins examining fragments of *opus testaceum*: "*Signore*," Bella Carmelina calls to him—"don't lean over that wall, it's dangerous. So many people have fallen over that wall. Are you an antiquarian? One can see it; but do be careful. Right there, down underneath, the Spirit has been seen . . ."

"The Spirit?"

" . . . of Tiberius. The spirit which cannot rest, and which only the sacrifice of new victims can satisfy; the spirit of the *Salto*. Many people have been precipitated from the *Salto*: only last week a Dutch artist fell over, and they found him all dashed to pieces. But do you know the story of the antiquarian? You yourself, if I am not mistaken, are an antiquarian or, as you say, an archæologist? Be careful, don't lean over that wall; it was just there that last year a celebrated antiquarian fell amongst the antiquities. He had been roaming amongst the ruins, then he leaned on that wall, just where you are now. He fell down . . . under the earth, and was never found again. A mystery!"

"But why was he not found again? What did he fall into?"

"He fell into antiquity."

They all fall there. There is always some foreigner ready to hurl himself into the abyss of antiquity. And Bella Carmelina, who has an inventive spirit, adapts that antiquity to all tastes, and all occasions.

Some years ago von Bedriaga, the celebrated reptilologist who came to study the epithelial coloration of the lizard, arrived in Capri, and asked Carmelina if reptiles existed amongst the ruins of Tiberius. "Reptiles? But the ruins swarm with snakes, and there is still the serpent of Tiberius. Why, last year an American, who also studied serpents, leaned on the edge of the 'cella serpentaria,' he missed his footing . . . It is horrible to think of it, but 't was really so; he disappeared; was devoured, perhaps, leaving nothing behind him—nothing except his drink to be paid for!" The German reptilologist looked dubious; but Carmelina had the text of Suetonius ready; she found the passage marked by the Canonico, which

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speaks of the monster serpent of Tiberius, which the Emperor fed with his own hands on human flesh: *Erat ei in oblectamenta serpens draco quem ex consuetudine manu sua cibitarius . . .*

All doubt disappeared: Carmelina never makes a mistake.

After the story of the serpent comes the story of Tiberius's Treasure; after the treasure, that of the fisherman. This was originally invented by old Spadaro, but since it has been confirmed by Suetonius and adapted by Carmelina, it must be true. A Capri fisherman, one of that generous race who ask nothing better than to present you with the products of their labours, having caught a mullet of phenomenal size and an enormous lobster decided to offer the mullet to the Emperor. He climbed up from the Grotto to the Palace through the secret passage, and found himself in the presence of Tiberius at a moment when the Emperor was engaged in private affairs. Such was Tiberius's indignation that he condemned the unwary fisherman to have his face rubbed with the mullet. The fisherman who felt that he had got off cheaply, thought (perhaps aloud) how lucky he had been not to have offered the lobster. Tiberius, guessing his thoughts, ordered that the lobster should be brought, and that the rest of him should be rubbed with that.

In this way is the history of our Tiberius made; thus Bella Carmelina and old Spadaro and everybody else collaborate in the creation of a new myth, of a new Tiberian tradition, of a new cult, which makes Timberio the antithesis, but also the complement, of the patron saint.

He is the affirmation of a religious spirit deep-rooted in the lowest strata of our people's consciousness; he represents the penetration of Paganism into Christianity, the perfect fusion of the thought which formed the one in the thought which originated the other. Thus are Gods born—as Timberio was born at Capri—to answer to the needs of a collective soul. Like every myth he is compact of religious essence and vital substance. When Capri has needed a symbol for all the non-existent vices for which she has been reprovèd, it has invented



its Tiberius. The figure of the tyrant who has made the fortunes of the island, has not only a moral significance but a material utility. Tiberius has enhanced the island's natural beauty; for more than a century he has attracted tourists from every part of the world; he has encouraged local industries and aided local commerce.

He has increased the value of the island's principal product, Capri wine, which is also a myth and, among the myths, a veteran.

An English author affected with incurable veracity, commenting on an ancient description of the island, asked if that nectar sung by the poets, which goes under the name of Capri wine, could have anything in common with the compound of sulphuric and tartaric acids which is pressed from the local grapes before they are ripe.

He falls into the usual error: he confuses the real, sharp, acid product of the local vintage, with the unreal myth.

The wine of Capri, the real wine sung by poets and exalted by hotel-keepers, does not exist; it is a mythical essence which constitutes one of the greatest resources of the island. And it was first placed on the market by Tiberius: a myth who bore a myth.

If you take the trouble to consult Siflinus, Zenodotus of Trazene, Strabo, The Younger Pliny, Stefano da Bisanzio, or any other classic, you will find references to Capri wine.

Stefano Bizantino is explicit, in *De Urbitus*, and Atheneus leaves no room for doubt, in the *Deipnosophisti*. Both of them mention Blaesus, the hero-comic Greek, noted for nothing but a single verse which has been handed down to posterity and made the fame of the poet and the wine together.

Perhaps Blaesus the poet never existed; certainly he never wrote that verse. But the verse exists; Tiberius had it repeated to his guests:

Sette matalidi mesci, di vino dolcissimo a noi.

There is an entire literature on that verse: all authors quote it, and an American historian, Bunn, has discussed it in a commentary which occupies an entire volume.

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Seven *matalidi*! But what are *matalidi*, and why exactly seven?

The *matalidi* were wine measures, chalices of gold or of crystal paste, carved, engraved or jewelled, in which Tiberius quaffed old Faustinian or Falernian. And the seven cups?

Local archaeology can explain them: seven to honour the name of Tiberio, which is composed of seven letters; a cup for every letter of the happy name. But has not the name in Latin eight letters? Then surely there should be eight cups? T-i-b-e-r-i-u-s. The pretorians, however, watching Tiberius when he was drunk, whispered *Biberius*.

Timberio has placed on the market the wine of Capri: *Lachryma Tiberii*: a brand of world-wide fame; and Capri has placed on the market Tiberius, an Emperor, for local consumption only.

Ave, Cæsar!





WEBER, THE MOON-WIT



ONCE upon a time there was a meeting at Capri between the Categorical Absurd and the Ineffably Incongruous. It was a case of love at first sight. German Philosophy, which conducted a matrimonial agency and arranged meetings between Italian Intelligence and Teuton Idiocy, brought the wedding off at once, and the union between the Categorical Absurd and the Ineffably Incongruous was duly gladdened by a happy event, even though the birth was a little premature. If the seed had come to maturity, I have no doubt I should have to record how a guffaw of coarse laughter came to birth in Capri. On the other hand, the offspring of the marriage was nothing more dangerous than a smile, by name August Weber. A smile at once ineffable and absurd. It became a type of Capri: the most amusing, the most genuine, the most inoffensive, the best-loved, of our whole collection.

I have made some efforts to fix the character of this type and have asked Weber himself for his own biography. Weber mobilized his little army of soldiers, the mobilization taking the form of poetry. He wrote a poem, in fact, and this is how it went:

My army consists,
Of twenty-six soldiers
Strong in the wrists
And broad in the shoulders,
Black are their faces, black is their kit,
You never saw army so gallant and fit.



All his twenty-six soldiers responded promptly to his call to arms: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z—the twenty six soldiers in Weber's army.

August Weber, with this little army of his, has been fighting for about forty years, and victoriously, for the cause of Capri. He is the chief of staff, and he it is who has organized war against the coalition of all the powers that subject humanity to the tyranny of Logic, Sense and Reason.

With aphorisms as lithe as tanks he has overwhelmed the barbed wire entanglements that surround the fortress of Conventional Truth; with playful epigrams, as effective as tear-gas, he has imposed final victory on the central empires of Common Sense. His grammar, like our own more illustrious, but not more gallant, army, had its Caporetto, where it was badly mauled about; but behind the lines, in the unshaken strongholds of his brain, he set his forces in order again. And then finally, when the supreme interests of folly were at stake, equal to the occasion, he led his army, the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, in close formation of cement and plaster, to its ultimate triumph, the Vittorio Veneto of Divine Folly.

Weber is a man of letters and, like all authors, has his own method of combining the 26 letters of the alphabet. If I have understood him properly, his particular method is something like this.

But do you know the working of the tombola, which, on a larger scale, is also the working of the Italian State Lottery? Perhaps I ought to explain that first, briefly. Ninety separate numbers are shaken up in a box and five are extracted. If you manage to state three out of the eventual five, you are lucky, very. And you have brought off what is called a *terno*. If you manage to state all the five, you are even luckier. I leave you to work out the chances against you. Well, that's what Weber does. He mixes up all the letters of the alphabet in his head, shakes them well, and proceeds to extract the letters in various combinations, in order to compose his aphorisms and epigrams. He withdraws three letters consecutively. They actually mean something. He has scored a *terno*. Q, u, o, which give you



'quo.' But that is not all. Next time he ventures to extract five letters, a *cinquina*. V, a, d, i, s, is the result. For some years afterwards Capri lies under the weight of the oracle: *Quo Vadis*.

Weber has any amount of luck at the game, and he frequently extracts perfect rhymes out of this cerebral lottery of his. That was how he once managed to score this *terno secco*, which is the most you can hope for at Tombola, and much more than you deserve:

Canzoni—Maccheroni—Faraglioni. In fact, a perfect synthesis of life at Capri.

For a few years Weber was completely under the literary influence of this *Quo Vadis*. And for the same period on his left sandal you read the legend: *Quo*; on his right sandal, *Vadis*. One day I found him sitting on the town-hall steps, resting. He had taken off his right sandal, the *Vadis* one.

"Why shouldn't I?" he exclaimed. "I am doing no *vadis* at the moment. I am sitting down. I'm resting."

The fact being that Weber is not a man who reasons with his feet. He reasons with his sandals.

Weber's biography is less interesting as a thing written than as a thing lived. His life is so diverting because it is a successful caricature of life; whilst life for the Philistine and the bourgeois is merely a serious proposition, in other words a caricature which has not come off.

For life in itself is a bore and is hardly worth living, but to make a joke of life is always worth the trouble, particularly if the life in question is your own; and to live a caricature of one's own life is the same as attaining Nirvana—a state of insensibility which follows upon the abolition of the most miserable of all the senses—Common Sense.

The spiritual Buddhism of August Weber is made up of renunciations of Common Sense. He began his career, like every German humanist, with Greek, Latin, Kant and Goethe, in the same way as Siddhattha Gautama began his career as a Himalayan prince. The day on which his brush or pen gave

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birth to its first painting or poem, composed according to the rules of perspective and metre, Weber must have contemplated his offspring with the same sort of bitterness with which Gautama beheld his first born, and must have exclaimed similarly: "Here is a bond which I must needs cut." During the night when the birth of the child was celebrated, Buddha fled from the merrymaking at Nautch and hid himself in the jungle. So did Weber. As soon as he painted his first painting he fled from Munich. And for forty years, ever since that time, he has been in Capri wandering in the jungle of the mind, in the virgin forests of nonsense. The teaching of Buddha derives from a torturing introspective question: "Why am I *not* completely happy?" The objective world did not exist for Buddha. Weber on the other hand is nearer to the philosophy of Taletus of Miletus and Heraclitus of Ephesus. He faces the problem of the universe armed with an unceasing curiosity regarding the external world.

The question Weber asks himself is "Why *am* I completely happy?"

And he discovers that he is happy (don't wait—O!) because he feeds on potato. (I am quoting one of his most celebrated poems). And then he wears sandals without leather—another important element in the art of complete felicity. That's how it is that Weber's literary production reduces itself to a symphony without variations on potatoes and sandals without leather.

August Weber exists in this state of Nirvana. He has attained a perfect vital equilibrium, oscillating between genius and madness, between lunatic science and scientific lunacy. With the air of uttering pure nonsense he reveals a philosophic truth; immediately after, he unwinds a meaningless string of words with the utmost portentousness. He knows five languages and does not know how to make use of one. He can ruin a reputation with a rhyme:

You know Brett Young?
Beware his tongue.



That sort of thing. Under the influence of a rhyme, he acquired a vice, virtuous as he is by nature.

Vesuvius smokes—ha, ha!
Fetch me a fat cigar!

After the eruption of 1902, Weber became a tobacco fiend.

Weber's written biography is not so interesting as the one he tells you and the one he tells you is dull compared with the one he lives.

Some years ago, a group of friends and Weber and I gathered together to join in an intellectual banquet on the terrace of the pension run by Weber himself, at the Piccola Marina, overlooking the sea and the Faraglioni rocks.

The Lord took in hand the *mise-en-scène* for the occasion. My business was to arrange the banquet. Our efforts were worthy of each other. At a certain point the stage manager turned on the scene the full moon of August—the moon which rises (or at least used to, before the war) between the Faraglioni.

In those times, before Marinetti made his appearance, the Faraglioni and the moon were still the best properties in the melodramatic scenario of Capri. The Faraglioni had not yet been branded by Marinetti as those "limestone crocodiles rearing on their hind legs" that nowadays break into the harmony of our halcyon sea. As for the moon, her place had not yet been usurped by arc-lamps and she had not yet been surprised in *flagrante adulterio* by her husband, that low blackguard, the sun. She still enjoyed a good reputation.

It was my idea to make use of this background, prepared by the celestial Producer, to stage our friend Weber. I set him against the screen of the full moon, like a super-film, and there Weber told the story of his arrival in Capri and his life on the island. The story flittered about our ears, skimming our fancies lightly, as bats flitter between the trees and skim their branches. He made almost no sound at all, nothing but a faint crepitation, like a bat playing in the twilight of reason. Only



every now and again, he slipped into a verse engendered by some aphorism he had just uttered. Or stumbled harshly for one blind moment against a German rhyme:

*Wenn Heraklit kläglich weinte
Nimmer ward des Lebens froh
Schopenhauer grämlich greinte
Seine Schüler ebenso.*

Weber prefaces his biography with the declaration that life is a riddle.

And although he modestly refrains from saying that he himself, by giving up the attempt to solve the riddle, has for that reason solved it, he makes you understand that that is the way, the only way, to get to the bottom of the mystery. Just as the Sphinx—*das grause Ungetier*, the cruel monster—dies when she gives up her secret;

*Ist unser Rätsel mal gelöst
So sterben wir . . .*

Weber remains a mystery, none the less, insoluble even in the solvent air of Capri. He came to us, like every knight of the German Ideal, on foot; or, which amounts to the same thing—sitting astride a Pedestrian Ideal.

At Munich (the Athens of the Iser, they call it) his life was as ordinary and banal as it could be, and he himself foresaw—with a retro-active foresight—after forty years—that if he had remained in Munich he would have become a *Regierungsrat*, pure and simple. At Capri, on the other hand, he remained what he was when he came and will be when he goes (but not back to Munich)—a sage, a madman, if you like; but he is both and he is neither one nor the other.

He writes: "Absentmindedly I wanted to be an engineer," and in the same absentminded way he put his name down for the faculty of engineering at the local Polytechnic. His name thus absentmindedly registered, he equipped himself with



brushes and colours and under the tuition of the celebrated painters, Wagner, and Diez of whom no one has ever heard, he began to "paint his ideas." This confession reveals the mystery, the essence of German art, the indigestible nature of its painting.

Amongst us painting represents the images of our fantasy, but they are concrete images. Amongst the Germans it portrays ideas, and they are abstract ideas.

"At this point"—he continues in his biography—"I had to make a digression." The digression is the origin of the story of his journey to Capri. It is a digression of forty years, a digression which is not yet finished, and which, I trust, will continue for many years. For this digression is the whole life of Weber. It is the sort of digression that everybody makes who comes to Capri.

August Weber made his way to Rome, and in Rome—which is the antechamber of Capri—he spent a year and a half; first he lived in the Palazzo di Fontana di Trevi, then in the Via Ripetta, where Goethe had preceded him. "But it was not that," he says, "which induced me to choose the Via Ripetta," but a more genuine and profoundly lyrical motive: "The fact that the room cost only 25 liras a month." In eighteen months he took three meals in a hotel; all the others at home, with a considerable quantity of poetry, a certain amount of fruit and bread and—it is he himself who confesses it without blushing for his gluttony—a little milk and coffee.

The enormous expenses which this dissipated life entailed forced him to look for more economical lodgings, and one day he set off for Naples. "By this time I could make no further economies in my food"—and you can take his word for it—"so I thought the only thing to do was to economise on the twenty-five liras paid for my furnished room."

When he arrived at Naples, Parthenope, that hospitable nymph, gave him a triumphant reception. Hardly had he stepped out of the train when he was surrounded by a mob of urchins who accompanied him—where do you think? You believe that August Weber, having come to Naples to econo-



mise those twenty-five liras a month which his lodging in Rome cost him, climbed into a taxi and made straight for the Grand Hotel?

Nothing of the kind. Followed by a horde of ragamuffins, he set off on foot for Santa Lucia, and still kept on. The lads dispersed at nightfall and he arrived at Fuorigrotta, took a small path and found a straw hut in a vineyard.

Now you must remember that Weber was a German. What did the Germans do in those days? When they arrived at Zanzibar, the Carolines, the Bismarck Archipelago, Kiao-Ciao, they entered upon a plan of annexation, pure and simple.

That's what Weber did with the straw hut of Fuorigrotta. He annexed it. "For four weeks," he says, "I succeeded in my intention of economising that twenty-five liras for furnished rooms."

Weltpolitik!

Let us not forget that Weber, as he explains in the first pages of his biography, was brought up on Hellenism at Munich, the Athens of the Iser, with the consequence that the migratory instinct of the Blonde Beast, the *Vikingsinstinkt*, was bound up in him with a cardiac infection of a classical nature.

Leaning over the wall at Santa Lucia, he beheld the sea of Ulysses, the outline of an island extending along the southern horizon. Was it Aea? Was it Circe's Island?

In those times the pigs used to go out to pasture in the streets of Naples. Circe obviously could not be very far away; the Cumæan Sybil must have paid a little visit to the straw hut at Fuorigrotta and put an idea into the head of this Argonaut of the pavements. Surely behind the point of Campanella lay Hellas. At Santa Lucia (where the main sewer debouched into the sea) there rose an odour which might very well emanate from the simultaneous decomposition of Lysia, Leucosia and Parthenope. (It will be remembered that all three ladies came to grief in these parts.) The characteristic odour of Naples . . .

The wake of Goethe's vessel was still visible on the Odyssean sea. Weber, who at that time carried his whole capital in his rucksack, had sold a few of his paintings at Rome and an



allowance had turned up from his mother; he therefore possessed a sum of sixty liras, even more perhaps, and he determined to buy a boat to sail across the sea to Hellas. Here in his biography occurs a passage which reveals the philosophic acumen which even in the greatest of the German dreamers is bound up with poetry. He says in just these words: "Without a boat I could never have reached Capri, the Island of my destiny!"

Now just try to fathom this truth: After the conflagration of the Phlegrean fields, Capri was sundered from the great limestone bank which united it with Africa, and when Weber cast eyes on the island from Naples, he understood clearly that he could never get there on foot. Not for one moment did he contemplate the possibility of getting on to the steamer that makes the regular voyage to Capri, twice daily. He writes in his biography: "So at this point I descended the steps at the quay of Santa Lucia to buy a boat, and the fishermen and sailors offered me one for forty liras. I closed."

If the idea had occurred to Weber of going to America instead, he would have made his way to the offices of the Cunard Line and said: "Excuse me, is the *Lusitania* for sale?"

"When I found myself on the open sea (having provided myself with a little food and water) I thought myself a king. The universe seemed to belong to me."

For eight days Weber kept on rowing hard in the bay without getting any nearer to the country of his dream. Finally a current pushed him back towards the little bay called Marechiaro, where he disembarked and rented a room for ten liras a month. "This was the last time but one on which I hired a room. At Capri I paid five liras a month for just three months and lived in a dismantled battery."

At Marechiaro he remained two months, then took to the oars again and in no less than three days and two nights reached Capri. The night before his arrival, when he had dropped off to sleep, a transatlantic liner passed within a few yards of him. He was awakened by the noise of its engines and by dint of rowing for all he was worth just managed to get out



of the way, "otherwise," he writes, "there would have been an end of me and I could never have given another thought to rooms furnished or unfurnished." Which is perhaps evident.

On the third day, when he was less than a mile from the island, he was sighted by the Customs' patrol boat, taken in tow and arrested; they had taken him for a smuggler. But they soon determined he was mad, and released him. And then he set up at the Piccola Marina.

"Only Old Spadaro (the real one) lived there in those days, along with his family; he was a rustic philosopher, and like the Tsar of Russia had a winter palace at Valentino and a summer palace at the Piccola Marina—an old hut of the customs-officers."

Spadaro received Weber with open arms and was his host for three months. Then he determined to set up his own establishment, and the right place was there waiting. It had been specially built for him . . . it was this same dismantled battery that he hired for five liras a month.

The story of the Madman of the Battery is a poem in itself, apart from all Weber's later developments.

It is already becoming mythical, and when every trace of Weber's occupation of the place will have disappeared, it will be the central shrine of a full-fledged Myth.

It was in this old battery that Weber made his first experiments regarding the unity of matter: if the vital atom is indivisible, all our food, the alimentary matter which we transform into vital energy, must be reducible to a single alimentary minimum, the common and indispensable basis of all food.

Weber was a poet and a philosopher. With what substance then must he nourish his philosophy and his poetry? With turnips, radishes, carrots, cucumbers and potatoes. The point was to reduce matter to its alimentary and elementary substance and then to extract from it the spirit of poetry and philosophy. This was what Weber succeeded in producing in his famous stew-pot. Everybody remembers Weber's stew-pot; a unique, a monstrous stew-pot, in which he heaped up his turnips, radishes, carrots, cucumbers and potatoes. He



cooked all these ingredients thoroughly and reduced them to an amorphous mash from which every day he extracted a ration sufficient to feed him and his muses. These were the words he inscribed on the stew-pot: "*Mihi et Musis.*"

When the stew-pot was nearly empty, he filled it again with turnips, radishes, carrots, cucumbers and potatoes. It has never been quite empty since he bought it.

This particular food-norm that Weber had devised is interesting for anyone who wants to understand thoroughly the meaning of his poetic and philosophic output. You must always get back to the sources of inspiration—in this case, turnips, radishes, carrots, cucumbers and potatoes.

Fortified by this simple, this spiritual, nutrition, Weber began to turn his attentions toward the great problem of existence.

Very early on, he discovered the fateful law that governs everything beginning with the letter S; the revelation was granted to him that Evil could not abide the letter S and for that reason he determined to devote himself to the occupations which begin with that letter and eschew all those that begin with M, which is antithetic to S. He abandoned painting ("Malerei," rather, for he still thought exclusively in German) and devoted himself heart and soul to the things which begin with S in that language. Amongst which were "*Sauzähmerei*" (taming pigs of wild habits and the female gender), "*Saucenmacherei*" (the confection of sauces), "*Sprachlererei*" (the teaching of languages) and so on. . . .

However, he soon learned that the first sketch of a philosophy of life could not support itself exclusively on the German dictionary. For his is a universal, a cosmic spirit, and the letter S was not quite cosmic enough. He abandoned it and sought for the solution of the problems of life along the paths of philosophy and poetry, reduced to their elementary essence. For that is Weber's secret—to reduce everything to its elementary essence, to go back to the amœba. In this way he reduced poetry to a matter exclusively of rhyme, rhyme itself to a pure optic phenomenon, a visual function. For Weber,

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rhyme is a thing of the eyes. The ears do not enter into it. He married for a rhyme, and brought up an exemplary family on it, one of the happiest in Capri. He said to himself:

Osa—Posa—Sposa!

To make these three concepts rhyme took him seven years, but considering the result they were years well spent. For the three concepts rhyme to perfection as if they ran on ball-bearings, and above all, because his marriage has had so happy a result.

Yet it was for a rhyme also that he was on the verge of divorce and the breaking up of his happy home. Unluckily Weber too had his conjugal Kreutzer Sonata; a monstrous, but purely literary, adultery which he committed under the spur of the mad passion he conceived for a rhyme. One day, in a book, Weber got hold of the name Eufemia. Eufemia? He began to turn it over in his mind; what poetic possibilities in such a name! Eufemia, Eufemia! There was something alluring about the very way the word ended—ia, mia—it was fascinating, but it was a nightmare. How the name tormented him, how many sleepless nights it inflicted upon the wretched poet. He thought and thought again and the rhyme never appeared; there was even a moment in which Weber hopelessly determined to abandon Eufemia, to dedicate himself to Manfredonia; you can rhyme all day long with Manfredonia—calofonia, calcidonia . . .

But he was warned in time that Manfredonia is not a woman's name; imagine the consequence of making love to a whole city. Weber shuddered. From a literary point of view, you can have as much polygamy as you like—but a whole city, really. . . . And so Weber returned to Eufemia. He thought and thought and thought again, and one fine day, he got it:

Eufemia,
Sposa mia.

which was nothing more nor less than a proposal of marriage.

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Having found the rhyme, he was making his plans for direct action when fortunately somebody told him that the accent in Eufèmia falls on the second syllable; visually that is to say, there was nothing wrong with the rhyme . . . but when it came to speech. . . . So Weber gave up the lady.

But there was no doubt about the sin of intention; the Gospel is explicit on the point.

Philosophy reduced to potatoes and sandals without leather is a matter of a handful of rhymes. And that's the whole life of Weber.

The life of Weber in Capri cannot be condensed, being already in itself a poem in brief, a song of incongruity in action, a ballad of unwisdom, fresh and heartening as a bird's song. It is the pilgrimage of intellect wearing a mask of imbecility to arrive at the holy place of folly, that mad Mecca called Capri.

In a country of madmen Weber became king; the dear figure of this old man of seventy, always blithe and gay, always happy, flourishing, vigorous, sound, the figure of this magnificent specimen of humanity, became a "type" of Capri, one of the great moon-wits whose life constitutes a marvellous example of perfect felicity resulting from perfect simplicity.

He is a Monsieur de la Palisse, who has dug a well of pure Capri waters out of which, as he needs it, he draws all that tiny modicum of philosophy which serves him in his task of living happily.

To keep his life in order all he needs is a rhyme. He exclaims, it might be, "Don't wait—O!" then he realises it rhymes with potato. The poem's done:

Don't wait—O!
To-morrow—potato!

On those sandals, perhaps:

Sandals without leather
In every weather
Until I
Die.



And henceforth to keep faith with his muse he lives exclusively on potatoes and banishes leather sternly from his foot-wear.

If you told anyone else that he thinks with his feet, you'd insult him.

Weber is proud of thinking with his feet. What is more he makes you too think with them. For Weber has now carried his philosophy written on his white canvas shoes for many years. During all that time there has been no event of international importance, no little detail of local gossip, which has not made its appearance duly on his shoes.

When the war broke out, Weber appeared on the piazza; on one shoe you read '*Guerra!*' on the other '*Erra!*' When the Kaiser was dethroned—right shoe '*Hanno tolto!*' left shoe '*L'Imperatore stolto!*'

What can the Germans do when they come to Capri without money (*moos*, they call it playfully) and want leather-shoes which are so expensive on the island? Left shoe: *Wenig moos*. Right shoe: *Lederlos*.

Weber's success is due to the fact that he does not *do* the original thing. He *is* it.

One day Weber founded a pension which became the rendezvous of all the Bohemian ne'er-do-wells in Europe. Being a hostelry of lunatics it is always crowded—there is no pleasanter place to meet in than Weber's pension. You would have thought the effort was doomed to failure? Not in the least. It is a great success. The Business-Manager—August Weber in person—has had more than one inspiration of pure genius.

There are hotels which charge just one fixed price *di lusso*, others which cater for lighter pockets. All of them therefore have a *clientèle* limited to one class of client. In the heyday of his pension, Weber assembled guests of every class; in his hotel you could even find clients who paid. But not many.

The prices were varied. Six liras (soup, two dishes, cheese and sweets); five liras (soup and two dishes); and four liras (soup and one dish).

So it was that at meal-times you witnessed the charming spectacle of the departure first of the four lira clients, then of

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the five, until only the aristocrats remained with their cheese and sweets.

The scale of deprivations varied within the categories; the poor guests got no chicken; but they got wine instead, and to console them, a vegetarian versicle was inscribed on their bills:

Don't drink the blood of chickens,
But drink grape's blood instead.
It's chicken-juice that thickens
Your speech and muffs your head.

The most constant clients were treated with special favour; on the egg they got for breakfast was inscribed a verse incubated by August Weber.

Rebecca Ladigenska, a Russian artist who set out from Vladivostock in the East every year to stay for a time at the Pension Weber, found the following poem on her egg the first day she arrived:

East and West
Rebecca's best.

At a certain point in his life Weber devoted himself to a lapidary art, and for twenty years the walls of Capri were encrusted with his whole philosophy. But when the war broke out the price of cement went up, and small-change philosophy became a luxury. To be able to buy the cement, necessary for modelling this lapidary wisdom, he found it necessary to economise on something else. Sugar, it was. During the war he took his coffee without sugar, converting his ration into cement.

But at this juncture he perceived that there was another medium for propagating his ideas: the press. He founded a journal, called *Laocoon*.

Laocoon, Courier of the Arts: Is there anyone in Capri who keeps pace with the child of Weber's daily labour? Winter and summer, sun and rain, he turns out his manuscript leaflet of adorable absurdity. *Laocoon*, Courier of the Arts; a single sheet of paper, which he religiously leaves at the café every morning,



under the illusion that he produces, from day to day, the complete chronicle of life at Capri. A chronicle in which the following never fail to be recorded—the Kaiser, the world-war, shoes without leather, and (don't wait—O), to-morrow potato; a certain Attanasio, and a painter named Gooding, chosen because he rhymes with rice-pudding.

Nobody, or scarcely anybody, takes notice of this laborious periodical. And he provides not merely a daily paper, but a supplement, too, consisting of a painting which, like the paper, is also a daily.

For every day in his life Weber writes a journal and paints a picture. The picture is not more objectionable than the countless other paintings which are turned out in Capri every day of the year, but it has this advantage over all its competitors: it has a reverse as well as an obverse side, and on this side he inscribes a poem which puts the painted side of the production out of your head.

So that the artistic activity of Weber is a multiple affair. Whilst, as a painter, he writes exceedingly bad verses, as a writer, he paints paintings similar to all other paintings painted in Capri—as bad as the verses, that is to say. But it is neither as painter nor writer that he is interesting, but as a type . . . and the type finds its most genuine expression in his *Laocoon*, *Courier of the Arts*, a masterpiece of incongruous patience.

The *Courier of the Arts*, above all, does not occupy itself with Art; its themes are exclusively the Kaiser, Attanasio, Gooding and the scarcity of potatoes. Occasionally he touches lightly and felicitously on some question of economics. Listen to the way in which *Laocoon* summed up, in an issue of one leaflet (each side containing about 150 words) the whole matter of German Finance!

“*Marco* (i.e. the German Mark). A well-to-do family (i.e. Germany), had a servant, Marco by name, who did all the errands for the family. Every morning he went to the various shops and bought butter, eggs, cheese, and other provisions and carried them home. His height was then only 1.25 (pre-

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war exchange as against the lira), but he was slim and swift and carried a great deal of stuff home. Seeing that this family was very sinful, particularly against its neighbours and poor people generally, God punished it through its servant Marco, making him become smaller and smaller every day; Marco reached 0.60, then 0.30 . . . till he reached one centesimo and then naturally could carry home practically nothing at all. Then everybody started weeping and wailing and prayed to God to make Marco grow again, which God did not choose to do until the family should return to practise piously the commandments of our holy religion . . .”

August Weber, *ave!* I want to say good-bye to you, but I can't. No one can.

How can you say good-bye to Folly?

I salute you, as I would a Cæsar. You, for our part, might aptly say: *Ridituri te salutant!*

Ave, Cæsar, Augustus, Prince of Nonsense, High Priest of Lunacy!

Ave, first born of the Categorical Absurd, legitimate offspring of the Ineffably Incongruous!

Blessed be your profoundly foolish smile that came to mitigate the harshness of that coarse laughter bellowed by your countrymen drunk on quarts of German beer, as they staggered about the island—blessed be your drunkenness which is nothing more than a drunkenness upon sun-rays.

Blessed be all your innocent humours—innocent even of humour.

Ancient symbol of the age which grows ever young again in simple minds, in pure hearts, in clean bodies, as your mind and heart and body are. Farewell!

Farewell, heliolithic myth of Capri; you who are as primitive as the prehistoric cavern-dweller in the Grotto of the Ferns and who, among the orgiastic dissipation of modern men, have the secret of moderating the aphrodisiac ferments engendered by milk watered down with Seltzer; you who plunge into the Mediterranean every day to cleanse your spirit of Germanism; who can give to the folds of your shawl the

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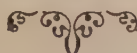
same grace as that with which the Venus Anadyomene rising from her bath contracts the flesh of her perfect body; who take the Muse by the throat and abrade her fair skin till it bleeds out a rhyme for you, with the same savage delicacy as that wherewith Mithras, the Capri deity, sacrificed the bull till the blood that he needed to wash himself free from all stain gushed forth; farewell!

Philosopher who has rejected the philosophy of your own country, and come to us to quench your thirst at the fountains of our blithe, our absurd, island life; thoughtless, incoherent, leading nowhither; poet, who, when a rhyme fails you, fall back on "potatoes," and carry your verse without feet, upon shoes without leather, farewell! Farewell again!





WESTERGARD, THE HELIO-MYTH



AT the beginning of every summer when the lizards have put on their green mantle striped at the neck with the blue veinings of love, when the snakes begin to leave their scale sloughs on the dry stone walls—every year, for many years now, perhaps for many centuries, upon that certain day when the sun triumphs in the zodiac and assumes complete command over all the forces of sea, and sky—a cry rings out suddenly over the Island of Capri.

Hello, old friend!

It is a signal of alarm. There follows the report of some piece of small calibre—a three-pounder. Then a loud whistle, shrill, deafening. Eardrums caved in!

Hello! Hello! Hello!

Pounding of anti-aircraft artillery. All four chambers of the heart crumble, ribs crack, diaphragm splits, every nerve strung to breaking point.

Then a salvo: Comrade, comrade, comrade!

Alternate salutes of naval guns, big field guns. Flare and flame of glory! The Sun! The Sun! Deep rumblings of joy in the throat, like far guns drumming and dying. A sudden musketry rattle of laughter. The whole sky leaping and flickering with exclamation marks.

That is Oscar Westergard's salute to Capri!

He reappears with astronomic regularity, like a comet, every year . . . every century, who knows? He reappears like

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the sign of Sagittarius in the summer solstice when the sun is in Taurus and is about to enter into Leo.

They come to Capri without fail—Westergard and the dog-days.

Like a star hoary with age, but shining always. A star which follows its own motion with an inexorable rhythm—*ohne Hast aber ohne Rast*—upon the trajectory of an eclipse whose foci are the two centres of gravitation ruling his astral existence. The sun and Weber.

Westergard comes to us to find his two old friends again, the Sun and Weber. And all three, Sun-God the father, his Son, Westergard, and the Holy Incongruous Ghost of Capri, by name Weber, make a uniform and triple divinity.

The Sun eternal; Westergard, almost eternal, but young to his finger-tips. He is an old man whom everybody remembers as young, and whom, when he was young, everybody remembers as old. Spirit and myth of the Sun. His age is not known. But you might be able to determine it if you calculate the axis of the sun's deviation. In the course of centuries the sun deviates from its path. Westergard has never deviated. He is a point fixed in eternity. His sun-devoted spirit is thrown open to our prime star as the mouth of a Mithraic cave was chosen that the sun might fill it upon rising.

The sun has enjoined a mission upon him; it is for him to demonstrate to profiteers and parvenus, to the wearers of frock coats, the drinkers of cocktails, the secret of the art of living; he who lives upon a single shirt flung open at the neck and on one single suit; he who drinks not cocktails but light; he who is himself happy and makes all who cast eyes upon him as happy as himself.

He has a mission from the sun. Hair ruffled, abstracted from the common world, distracted from common passions, in profile he resembles the hound-headed deity, Anubis Latrans.

He was sitting the other day on the steps of the church. In the piazza behind him, a figure stopped to look at him, perhaps without seeing him. It was none other than C. C. Coleman, the Barbey d'Aurevilly of New York, the Beau Brummel of Capri,

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the most elegant octogenarian on the island since the perfumed darlings of Tiberius.

C. C. Coleman, whose vesture floated about him as it were a nimbus of cærulean blue, never seemed more like the Olympian Jupiter than at that moment, with his beard dressed in grey ringlets and fixed into a semblance of carven yellow ivory, in the most empyrean baroque *à la* Bernini. Westergard, his beard like a hayrick, his hair whistling in the wind, seemed a boulder from Monte Solaro peaked and grey as its own limestone, hewn crudely out of the mountain, primeval, eternal.

Compare, I beg you, the two Myths: Jupiter Elegans and the Anubis Latrans. . . . For this is the mission of Westergard:

. . . *Jovi nostro latrantem opponere Anubim.*

Nobody knows when Westergard came to Capri for the first time. Perhaps he has been there for all time. No time was when he was not.

It may have been at the time of Osiris, Mizraim and Zoroaster. He is coeval with Mithras. Perhaps it was he, at all events if it wasn't Weber, who taught the Sirens German. It is evident that the Sirens sang in that language. For when Ulysses passed under the Punta di Mulo at the Piccola Marina, he heard the guttural strains of the Lorelei proceeding from the Strand Pension, or at least from the little grotto where the pension was housed at that time. That is why he determined against landing at Capri, and steering out of harm's way set sail for Scylla and Charybdis.

Westergard came from Norway, an anachronism incarnate, and is related to all the best people in nordic mythology. He is a close relative of Thor; he probably was *Heerkönig* in the armies of Ægir. He is eternal, but still a stripling. He must be at least three or four thousand years old, but he does not seem more than two thousand. It appears that he and Mithras never got on well together; for Mithras was one of those inferior Levantine deities. The suggestion has been made that it was a question of some woman or other.

Cybele?



It is at all events certain that Mithras cleared out of Capri and Westergard remained, the last of the genuine true-blue solar myths. So much so that the Italian Government has talked of imposing on him the Turnover in connection with his large traffic in sunshine.

At the time of the Læstrygonians all went well with him, and at the time of the Teleboans, still better. He was an official of the state registry at the time when Telon, King of the Teleboans, got married to a nymph from the Sebeti. And being a friend of the family, he was godfather to their first-born. Ebalus, at the baptismal font.

When Ebalus set out to take part in the first Risorgimento war, he fought with Æneas against Rome. Business at Capri and small industries generally began to languish, and Westergard devoted his energies to waking up the tourist business. He arranged the first Tyrrhenian tour of the Hellenes, a whole party of them, under the guidance of Apollo's dove; that was just the time at which the profiteers who had made their fortune out of the Trojan War began to travel; for the drachma, at 21.50, was well in advance of the dollar.

It seems likely that he was also mixed up in that affair of the withered Ilex, which suddenly brought forth leaves at the moment Augustus landed on the island. Most authorities have decided that it was a real estate-agent's trick to raise the value of property in preparation for the great boom in imperial villas. And one or two have whispered that it was all worked with some cunning hyperphosphate of Norwegian origin. The imputation as regards Westergard is only too evident.

At all events from that moment every trace of Westergard is lost; the last time anybody set eyes on him was on the rock of Monacone when Masgaba, Augustus's African architect, was buried there. He sent a wreath of flowers and a little lachrymal full of real tears, to the funeral of Crispina, the wife of Commodus, at the Grande Marina; finally he figures as a witness in the Act of Donation of Capri to the Abbot of Montecassino.

Thereafter, in the fifth century, nothing more is heard of him; perhaps he journeyed to Norway to set his family affairs

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in order. Not another trace for fourteen or fifteen centuries. But one day about forty years ago, he reappeared. There was the sound of a cannonade. Comrade! A broadside of big guns, a thunderous chorus which sang of his great heart exploding with love for the island he had never forgotten and will never forget.

When Westergard returned to Capri, he wore the same suit, a little shabbier now, which was brand-new at the sacrifice of the young man Hypatus in the Grotto of Matromania during the times of Augustus. (The pathetic tablet recording the episode in Greek verses unaccountably omits to mention the presence of Westergard.)

During the period of his absence, fourteen or fifteen centuries, as I have said, he had never had time to get his beard trimmed, so the first thing he did when he reappeared was to go to his barber to have it seen to—the same barber who had shaved Caligula, on the occasion when the future emperor assumed the *toga virilis* at Capri.

But Caligula's barber was dead! And so was Caligula, and Crispina, and Lucilla and Blæsus. Yes, Blæsus the poet. Alas! We grow old, we grow old! Even Westergard is at last beginning to lose his memory. Didn't Blæsus the poet die before Westergard left Capri? Quite true—but how keep pace with all this death and dying! We are growing old! We are growing old!

Every year, as soon as he returns, Westergard finds out who has been carried off.

What! The good old Registrar of Births and Deaths! Has *he* gone now?

And Leto? And Lovatti? Poor old Lovatti!

Westergard is almost reduced to tears. What a shame, so many dead in one year! You think you can hear him reciting his litany of the dead under his breath:

Ulysses? Dead . . . Augustus, Tiberius, Masgaba, poor Masgaba done in after that orgy. . . . Yes, I was there too at that wonderful funeral of his, on the rock of Monacone.

And Lysia . . . Parthenope, Lysia, Parthenope . . . and



that third siren? What was her name? Leucosia! What a nasty end! And Telon, Ebalus . . . all dead, all dead!

Then he stops short in order to greet some old friend of his:

"Don Giovanni! Dear Don Giovanni! Still the firework-king? What a lot of life you've got in you yet! What a pleasure it is to see you! Good old man!" When Westergard meets Don Giovanni (called Cicione the firework-king) he hardly knows what to do with himself, he is so delighted to see his friend so very much alive and kicking. It is Cicione who has the fireworks in hand, or out of hand. For half a century he has been letting off fireworks to the eternal glory of all the saints, all the mayors, all the deputies of the island; he fires the broadsides on the feast of San Costanzo, he fires the famous mortar for the Madonna della Libera, the seaman's Madonna down at the Grande Marina; he fires the crackers which once made a hole in the breakwater on the feast of the Assumption. And Westergard thinks all the world of him; for Westergard's hearing is a little faulty now; you might almost say—in fact you might quite say—that he has become deaf, stone deaf. It is any number of years now since he has heard a sound. He who holds converse with Westergard needs pencil and paper; or, if you like, a bomb; but not any bomb will do. Try Don Giovanni's.

On one occasion Westergard happened to be sitting on the steps of the church in the piazza, when Don Giovanni fired the broadside of San Costanzo—a hundred mortars loaded with picrate—and Westergard actually thought he heard some one murmuring in his ear. He started with pleasure, "What's that you say?"

That was how he learned that deafness is a purely relative affair and that San Costanzo can still work miracles. None the less he returned at once into a state of complete deafness. He can enjoy Capri without a reservation of any kind. Hermetically deaf, he is the perfect hedonist of the island who sees all her beauties and hears none of the hubbub.

It was a deafness that was conferred on him by the special grace of God. *Ducam eam ad sorditudinem et loquar ad cor ejus—*



I don't know if I've got it quite right, but there's a verse in the Bible something after that manner, teaching the ways of the heart. It goes on like this, I think: *Respice ad sorditudinem et ecce gloria!*

To get straight to the heart of those of our fellow-humans who are gentlest and most lovable you must leap over the obstacle of the spoken word; the ear is the doorway to a miniature hell which exists in the spirits of us all. *Janua diaboli*. It is because of our ears, and nothing else, that we men do not understand one another; with their intricate tortuous channelings they deflect the spirit of our words, and only a wasted corrupt version of them reaches the heart. There are certain deaf men whom we can conceive as nothing but deaf if we are to retain our love for them. Like Westergard, like Casella, the old bookseller of Naples, hearing for them was an impediment which they got rid of. Our thought and theirs pass between us by the honest highroad of the eyes. They drink with their eyes the meanings we need not utter.

How would you be able to carry on a conversation with old Casella of Naples who sits pontifically in his ancient worm-eaten book-shop, his Vatican of dreams, making your heart glad with wisdom; how could you carry on a conversation with Casella if he were not deaf? At first the dark twilight of his cavern will produce in you a sense of fear, of foreboding; but you will soon be comforted by the century-old coolness of his parchments, and your eyes will rest upon the calm dignity of the finest decoration that has ever adorned the dwelling of men: shelves, shelves, shelves, books, books, books, all giving off faintly the odour of intellectual must. For one moment only will you find yourself lost in this semi-darkness heavy with the thought of so many centuries, that rises like an exhalation from these innumerable books.

Then suddenly, a light rises palely and slowly on the scene. It is nothing more than old Casella who has lifted up his pale luminous moon-face, so lighting up all his books with the warm light of his passionate bibliophily.

Casella makes a sign that he is deaf, to reassure you. He



wins you to his heart by his very deafness, like Westergard himself. When you talk to Westergard, all his face lights up. His joy seems to course in tiny rivulets along its hundred folds. His heart swells and vibrates like a gong pendulous in an air of love and delight. And his eyes—the eyes of a deaf man who knows he is well loved—might seem a meadow thick with flowers waiting for the rain to freshen them. It is your unspoken words that bedew those meadows. And after you have spoken with him and go your way leaving him to sit alone there in the piazza, he will close his eyes, as the flowers of a meadow close at evening, happy with the showers which, that day, have fallen upon them.

Westergard, you have gathered, is deaf. He calls it his misfortune, but he knows better, and so do we. It is his great charm.

We feel that he is an antique myth, almost eternal; young as a fledgling but hoary as a monument, an institution.

When he arrives the lizards put on their green mantles striped at the neck with the blue veinings of love; it is the time when the apricots ripen and the plums; the vines, assured by his reappearance, festoon themselves with trailers and suspend the lamps of their fruit.

He is the forerunner of the high summer heats; he goes before the Sun upon his march into Leo, and all the island is fecundated, sanctified with fullness.

This ancient who has come amongst us for so many years, who has been of our company for so many centuries, is the vessel into whom the sun of our island has poured his sacred spirit. No man is more brimful with the sun, none more justly the sun's own deputy.

Gnarled, tousled and weather-beaten, his ravelled locks and beard streaming like a cataract down his rough bosom, a rock still shimmering with the volcanic fire which moulded the phlegrean spirit of this place—Westergard is the living myth of Capri, red-hot with the sun, fiery with all his colours, dazzling with his keenest radiance.

His mouth yawns wide like one of our grottos, and is con-

WESTERGARD, THE HELIO-MYTH



vulsed with that "great geological laughter" that proclaims the spirit of joy eternal in one single cry, prolonged and deathless. It is as if the voices of all the centuries and all the ages sang together; the ages wherein the eternal youth of Capri has matured and become lovely.

The soul of Westergard animated that music—it is a cry of defiance against frock-coat, starched shirt, paint and powder, Parisian corsets, high heels, cocktails, Coty perfumes, fox-trots, jazz-bands. . . .

It is the cry of rebellion wrung from the hearts of all those wretched creatures upon Capri whom Society has condemned to penal servitude in the *hôtel de luxe*; and the forfeiture of all incivil rights.





MIRADOIS, THE GERMAN CHRIST



MIRADOIS, in other words Gustavus Julius Franz Otto Dobrich, must surely have felt in his vitals the stirring of a potent selective affinity, when, passing through the *Vicolo Miradeus* in Naples, he renounced the bunch of names with which his German godfathers and godmother had loaded him, and adopted once and for all the title of that squalid alley. Miradois, originally incarnate at Ziegeldorf in Saxony, first “conjugated”—as he puts it—at the Theosophical Society in Berlin, converted to Catholicism in the Estremadura, and later baptised in Italy—Miradois, the pilgrim of vegetarianism, the Pangerman Franciscan, has held for the last ten years, the office of Teutonic Christ on Capri.

His coiffure, his beard, his tunic (except for a slight variation in the shape of the mantle), his philosophy, and his propaganda, his nutriment and his fertility were almost equal to those of Siebenfach, the first Teutonic Christ who patronized the island. But Siebenfach was a pre-war Christ—the Messiah of a prosperous, well-nourished, beery, haughty Germany, while Miradois was the Messiah of a Germany humiliated, defeated, the Germany of the depreciated mark.

The contrast between the methods of Miradois and Siebenfach reflected the difference in the period of their activities. Siebenfach’s attitude was flamboyant, insolent, irritating. He came to Capri as a militant vegetarian, with a carnivorous appetite, and an exhaustive experience in the “back to nature” cult. Before his arrival he had paved the way



for a spectacular notoriety. But in spite of these precautions fortune had not favoured him; for, although he had been persecuted in Austria and arrested in Bavaria, he had not managed to unload his output of vegetarian paintings. So, knowing that his failure in Austria and Bavaria might be turned into success on Capri, to Capri he came with a troupe of free traders in free love, all clad appropriately in the *naturmensch* costume which has since become the conventional clothing of vegetarian artists.

Siebenfach sniffed at his new surroundings; he guessed that there was something rotten in the state of Capri. It was the local school of landscape painting. The eternal cobalt of the sky and the ultramarine of the sea had gone rancid. The Germans, suddenly intellectualised, asked for something more than a simple plastic interplay of colour and form on canvas: they wanted to find an idea, a theory, a philosophic basis, or a religious principle beneath their pictures. Siebenfach was the man for them. In the Capri landscape there were as yet no ideas, theories, systems or principles. Siebenfach brought them all from Germany in his portmanteau.

He also brought a complete organisation. He came with a well trained troupe, a ravenous pack of followers. He brought direct from Germany the raw materials of our landscape-industry: square miles of canvas encrusted with plaster of Paris, vast spatulas like trowels, bistre, bitumen and lamp-black by the hundredweight. He came like a whirlwind, and when he arrived it seemed as though his fury must sweep away all the pretty little Faraglioni, blue grottoes and natural arches in the modest studios of the local painters. He and his "school" were for large dimensions and treatment. He rented enormous studios, and since his largest picture would not go inside them, he painted it on the outer walls where it was visible from the sea, so that all the tourists knew where Siebenfach's exhibition was. Even if they didn't see it when they landed there was no fear of their missing it. As soon as they debouched on the Piazza they would be met by a horde of disciples, or even by Siebenfach himself. He stood there, his

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hair flying, his robe flapping in the wind. There, with clenched fist raised threateningly, he played the Jesus Christ, preaching free love, inciting to nakedness, dictating a herbal dietary, launching anathemas against fermented drink, and if he saw that his audience was not convinced, he pointed to the door of his exhibition: entrance two liras; reduced prices for conducted tours.

"Thou shalt not kill"—he would cry as he stood at the door. It was the title of the first picture; a relatively virgin Capri forest, from which emerged an enormous stag, and between the horns of the stag you saw the head of Christ—a portrait of Siebenfach painted by his pupils—shouting "Thou shalt not kill" in German. For Siebenfach was the Pangermanic word made flesh, and his voice was the voice of pre-war Germany.

Then there was a picture symbolizing vegetarianism, and another symbolizing free love—not carnal love, you must understand, but free love fed on potatoes, cabbages, and carrots. Then came the picture of the calf. At first sight the calf appeared to be a suckling calf, but do not deceive yourself. You, wretched man, have stolen the milk from him, Siebenfach tells you; and he takes up the cudgels of the milk calf (*Kalbsbraten mit Kartoffeln*). Of all these symbolical pictures the most impressive was that of free love; a condensed course in few lessons. Obviously his disciples of both sexes had already been instructed.

Pre-war Germany: the sun of whose mentality has now set.

* * * * *

Miradois came to Capri after the war, to occupy the post which Siebenfach had officially vacated. Fortunately he has written his biography and from it one can glean the most relevant facts of his career. One learns how he was "incarnated" at Ziegeldorf, in Saxony, son of the *Landwirt Dr. phil.* Gustavus Dobrich, an agriculturist—no agriculturist in Germany could be less than a *Dr. phil.*—and of Tecla, his wife. This name, Tecla, was later assumed by a factory of synthetic—that is, false precious stones; but the mother of



Miradois manufactured a genuine jewel, the little Julius Gustavus etc. He is a dolichocephalic German. Unless you bear that in mind you will never be able to understand his mission; because that is what differentiates him from the Christ of Nazareth. The Germans have raised doubts as to the Aryan origin of Christ which may explain the failure of his mission on earth; his Germanity is a little vague. One can only suggest that during the time which preceded the birth of the Nazarene, the German legions of the Empire were quartered in Palestine. About Miradois, however there can be no doubt. Jews do not grow in Ziegeldorf, it is "judenfrei."

Siebenfach preached at a time in which it was generally agreed that Germany could beat the world, but the incident of the great war has modified, if not the end of the programme, at least the means by which it should have been carried out.

Of course the programme itself is a historical and anthropological necessity. Clausewitz proclaimed that in a rudimentary military form—"without war Germany could not have been"—Treitschke embodied it in a theory, and H. S. Chamberlain set the seal of authority upon it in his *Grundlagen des XIX Jahrhunderts* in which it was shown to be axiomatic that the dolichocephalic German must inevitably beat the brachycephalic inhabitants of all other countries.

But since the result has not worked out according to plan, since Germany has not done the beating but has been beaten, do not the doctrines of Clausewitz, the theory of Treitschke and the proof of Houston Chamberlain fall to the ground?

Not in the least: they are completed quite simply by the Messianic teaching of Miradois, the Teutonic Christ of Capri.

Miradois came to Capri to herald the advent of a new Germany—not that gross, fleshy blonde who was displayed on the stamps of the Deutsches Reich in A.D. 1914—but of a Germany which has made expiation—*die Sühne*—a Germany who climbs, like a penitent (but not too penitent) Magdalen, the calvary of reparations, eager to wipe up the precious drops which will not fall from the lachrymal glands of the allies.

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This new Germany is more than ever the land of the chosen people, the Lord's Anointed. It is the real, the greater Pangermanic Germany who no longer needs to assure her destiny, and the destinies of other people, by expiation. Since the war, the figure of this new Germany has become familiar to Italians; because, once more, our land has been chosen as a site for the experiment. Only our soil could receive the seed, only our sun could ripen the fruit of the new idea which was first revealed to us by the coming of the *Wandervögel*, those migratory birds launched on the air in homosexual couples, those herds of blond beasts with tousled hair, those gaunt and hairless beggars, those ragged violinists playing the plaintive, discouraged airs that celebrate the occupation of the Ruhr. Then came the broken rout of the *Intelligentzia*, with a glut of spiritual remnants, shopsoiled ideas, a whole discredited philosophy of predominance that has missed its market; university tutors, students, introspective painters, pastors, theosophists, parasitic psycho-analysts. Lastly, the organisers of the great banking swindle; the German Jews of Frankfort, Warsaw and Chicago, insolently waving the *Rentenmark* in our faces and swilling all the champagne that our own profiteers had left on the island.

It was the advent of this Germany that Miradois, in the habit of a Franciscan pilgrim, in a tunic tattered, but carefully shaped to the waist, came to announce.

It was natural that he should come to Capri—where else could he have gone? There was no other air in the world in which he could have ventilated his new idea. Capri has always been the repository and often the nursery of new ideas, the hotbed from which spring the most incredible reforms. From Luther to Miradois its crags have echoed the cry "*Los von Rom!*" but never, alas, the cry: "Away from Capri!"

Did not Count Pappengut's crusade for total immersion and Marston's propaganda for the preservation of nudity emanate from Capri? Was not the movement for a return to monogamy launched from our shores? Here, amid the prickly pears and the euphorbia, the first Bolsheviks sat at the feet of



Lenin and Lunacharsky. Here the serious education of the abdominal muscles, by the rhythmical method of Dalcroze was first attempted. Where in the world, if not at Capri, could Miradois come to preach the new German Word?

Beginning with his incarnation, effected at Ziegeldorf by Tecla and her necessary accomplice the *Landwirt Dr. phil.* Gustavus Dobrich, Miradois has described, by pen and word of mouth, the history of his life before his Messianic mission to Capri began. He says that he first studied the political economy of Lujo Brentano, the philosophy of Nietzsche, Kant, Schopenhauer; the poetry of Uhland and Hebbel-Baabe. Then he delved deeply in biblical and apochryphal religions; Shintoism, Taoism, Mazdeism and Asiatic Sincretism; for four years he meditated on the four truths of Gautama the Buddah; two years he dedicated to St. Paul; the doctrine of Islam had no more mysteries for him and Confucius revealed to him the very essence of Chinese beliefs. All these studies were necessary to him, not because he foresaw his future Messianic mission, but simply because he was preparing to obtain a degree in Veterinary Surgery. When he had completed this cycle of economic and physico-religious studies, he graduated as a veterinary surgeon and practised his profession so successfully that after a few years he found himself occupying a high position in the Berlin Theosophical Society. Then he became "conjugated" with a female theosophist, and she, as he says "made him a father for the first time." After he had once got his hand in, this incident repeated itself so often that he divorced himself from theosophy and the theosophist and made for the St. Gothard Pass, the traditional road of all Gothic migrations.

For a long while he wandered through Italy, gaining time; he did not come direct to Capri because he was destined for the role of a Teutonic Christ, and his hair and beard were not yet of the regulation length. At last, when they were ready he landed on the island. But after two days he left. Siebenfach had forestalled him.

* * * * *

MIRADOIS, THE GERMAN CHRIST

All sorts of propagandists, preachers and apostles from every country establish themselves on Capri, but the career of Jesus Christ has always been exclusively reserved for the Germans. It has become a monopoly, and may perhaps become an abuse; but the fact remains that they alone feel themselves "called" for a Messianic career.

Their success is due to their perfect organisation, the meticulous attention which they give to details. Take for instance the sandals—a patent Bavarian model called the *Nazarene*, which nobody has ever succeeded in imitating; or the cut of the tunic, or that most important feature, the coiffure. Anybody can grow his hair long; but only a German can produce authentic tousled curls.

Do you remember Miradois' hair and beard?

When he entered Morgano's cafe, crowded, as he would say, with Scribes and Pharisees, he would look around and then, with a quick gesture of the hand, a *tour de main* which only he knew how to do, he would throw back his shock of hair, shaking that mane which no comb ever contaminated, as if to say to the Scribes and Pharisees "I am the Christ." And all the people nearest to him instinctively began to scratch their heads.

* * * * *

While waiting for the position of Jesus Christ at Capri to become vacant, Miradois passed the time at Naples. He needed a crowd of disciples to follow him, a crowd already initiated in the Pangermanic and Franciscan doctrines. Since his philosophy was Pangerman and his religion Franciscan, he decided to reconcile their spiritual opposition by the method of Pythagoras, the inventor of the multiplication-table, as applied to Free Love. He founded in Naples a "Holy Community of all men capable of generating and women capable of bearing children." It was not difficult to find them in Naples, and Miradois had no need to go into the highways and hedges. He collected them and put them together where and how he could, and explained to them the Pythagorean principle. In a

better ordered city the idea would have been more fortunate; in Naples where multiplication is done haphazard, without reference to the table of Pythagoras, the Holy Community attained vast proportions. According to the founder's intention it should have served for the selective production of a contingent of *Alahmannen* and *Monselmannen*; that is, Germans of the rarest strains; above all, spiritual Germans, fit to prepare the advent of that new Germany which had already reached an experimental stage on Capri.

But soon Miradois discovered that the Holy Community produced, not *Alahmannen* but *scugnizzi*, and so he decided to handle the matter himself. Being a scrupulous man, he felt himself bound by the conventional standards of propriety.

For mass-production free love is all very well, but when you pass from the case of a community to that of an individual, scandal must be avoided, and marriage becomes necessary.

In the eyes of Miradois matrimony was a sacrament. When he came to Capri he made that one of the main points of his doctrine. He found that on Capri—and not only on Capri but in all other places—his doctrine had not yet been adopted, people were living in sin: in other words the majority were married by the ordinary forms of Italian law at the Municipio. According to Miradois, Spiritual Matrimony, which is the only one that counts, is such an easy thing, so unharassed by legal formulæ, that it seems ridiculous that it has not been universally adopted. It is celebrated in the open air and in the presence of God. If the weather is damp or windy it can also be celebrated in a grotto or under the shelter of a tree. In the absence of the Registry Officer one can always be sure of the presence of God. Of course it is just as easy to make mistakes in spiritual matrimony as in legal concubinage, but in spiritual matrimony, at least, one has a remedy. One need only confess the mistake humbly and openly, and say a little prayer to God, in German. To make yourself understood by God it is always best to pray in his own language. This is the prayer of the *Miradoisgemeinschaft*:

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. . . *Gott, Du hast verheissen
dass Menschen auf Erde Götter sind,
die Dich durch Liebe preisen.*

Then if you wish to do so, you can begin all over again, provided that you always avoid the Registrar.

* * * * *

Miradois had to wait some years before the position that he desired became vacant. After the failure of the Holy Community he married, and with his wife made a pilgrimage in neutral Spain. As soon as the war was over he landed at Capri.

Except for a little novelty in the cut of the cape that fluttered under his hair he was in perfect order, with all the proper outfit of a Teutonic Christ. But the little novelty was not unpleasant. He had not combed his hair since the days when he passed the St. Gothard, seven or eight years before; and he wore the shirt in which he had "conjugated" his first marriage at the Berlin Theosophical Society. For a moment he raised hopes among the entomologists who had come to Capri to study the blind spiders of the Blue Grotto, that a number of new hybrids of insects might result from the naturalization on the island of the Iberian species which Miradois had brought with him. But the only new contribution to the entomology of the island that Miradois made is the *Carmencita*, a flea crossed between the pure Madrilene, which is very lively, and the common, fat and torpid flea of Capri. The real *Carmencita*, as it is called, only thrives at Capri, where Miradois established himself when he arrived; and when people tell you that it is found all over the island, they are deceiving you. As soon as tourists arrive at the Grande Marina they ask if there is a special breed of fleas at Capri, and the coral sellers pass off the ordinary *Pulex irritans* as *Carmencita*. People are always inclined to believe that we have special kinds of insects on Capri. If you are interested in mosquitoes they will tell you that we still have the Maremma breed—*Culex pertinax*—with a retractile proboscis, the descendants of samples imported at the time of Augustus. But

the mere threat of closing the drains, about which everyone has been talking for the last thirty years, has been sufficient to extinguish the classic species, and nothing now remains but our indigenous *Culex Pungens*.

As soon as Miradois arrived he settled in a tumbled down cottage at Caprile, in Anacapri, where he founded the first Mediterranean Institute for the Teaching of Gothic and Pangerman Propaganda, with complementary courses in theosophy. But at Anacapri he encountered unexpected competition: there were already in existence two or three moral and religious movements which absorbed all possible proselytes. There was Viebchen who had attracted half the foreign colony with his teaching of Monistic Polygamy. In addition to Viebchen there was Bedding, the spiritualistic zoophilist. Bedding was a good musician, and for almost half a century had played the flute to charm lizards. Every morning he went to the plateau of Damecuta, and there, among the ruins of the imperial villa, he sat on the ground, pulled out his flute and played Scotch reels to them, and when he had succeeded in gathering a few lizards together, he began to preach continence to them.

Miradois saw at once that there was little to be done in Anacapri, so he decided to descend to Capri. He lodged his family in comfort at the house of Spadaro, near the Faraglioni. He never considered economy, because it was his wife who paid the expenses of the ménage. For himself he proceeded to occupy a ruined goat shed in the Cala di Matromania. He kept for himself one baby, which he could not leave with the mother because it had not yet been weaned. He used that baby for propaganda, because according to his doctrine all suckling babies, after the seventh day of their birth, should be taken from the mother and raised by the father with whom they remain until they cut their teeth. By the time that they cut their teeth the mother should have another baby ready.

The Miradois Institute for Pilgrims of Both Sexes, stood, and still stands, in the little valley of Matromania and includes the goat house, the Grotto of Mithras and their immediate

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surroundings. A modest and severe establishment as far as buildings go, but impressive in the light of its historic and mythical associations. Think of that background; first of all the Grotto of Mithras—*magno Mithrae antro*. There is another etymology, it is true; *magna mater*, from which *Matromania* is derived—there is *magnae matris antrum* . . from the Great Mother, from Cibeles. Miradois himself preferred the name to be derived from Mithras.

Because Mithras, a solar god, is an anti-German divinity *par excellence*. The celebrated Mithraic bas-relief of Capri shows him, wearing a cap and Persian costume, in the act of slaying the bull, which a dog, a lion and a slippery serpent are attacking; then there are two Genii, each with an aureole of rays, and all the signs of the Zodiac, the symbols of solstice and equinox, signs and figures of the solar cult, all anti-German.

It was the Grotto of Mithras that Miradois selected for his pan-German propaganda. There, where the cry of the innocent youth Hypatus has echoed for over two thousand years, the new Messiah of the new Germany made his own voice heard. And this is what he sang:

*"Voglio comporre canzoni per viandanti!
Canzoni per navigatori et artesani vagabondanti:
Io canterà i miei canzoni et ognuno
farà del mio canzone il canzone suo."*

A few months after the foundation of the Miradois Institute, it became the goal and meeting place of all the German *Wandervögel*. To these migratory birds Miradois preached the Pangerman idea; he taught them to throw a javelin in the face of the Goddess Rome:

*Er schleudert die Harpune
Dem Römer ins Gesicht!*

The Pangerman propaganda would have been continued undisturbed in the Grotto of Matromania and its annexes, if



they had not been complicated by the Franciscan spirit. Miradois followed the rule of the Poor Man of Assisi, and went about the island with a pilgrim's staff. One day, however, he used it to instill his dolichocephalic doctrine into a brachiocephalic head and ended by appearing before the Mayor accompanied by the police.

There was no joking with the Mayor of those days because he was an aesthete. Miradois appeared before him in full war-paint, with the *rucksack* on his shoulders, the guilty Franciscan staff in his hands, and a baby, sucking a comforter, in his arms. He was ready, as he said, to hear himself condemned, to bow to his fate and be extradited. The idea of extradition was not displeasing to the Mayor, but, unluckily, he found that he had to explain an error of procedure in the report of the Police. The Inspector had described the staff as a weapon of concussion, in other words its spiritual significance had escaped him. Miradois' explanation was sufficient to invalidate all the evidence for the prosecution. With a look that almost withered the poor Inspector, Miradois grasped his staff, waved it threateningly, and with a roar of Pangermanic rage explained that it was not a material but a "spiritual weapon." To avoid bloodshed the Mayor made the Inspector retire and was left alone with Miradois. After a few minutes' silence Miradois demanded:

—"*Sprechen Sie deutsch?*"

—"*Man spricht deutsch*"—the Mayor replied.

And then in German, the Franciscan Pilgrim launched a terrible accusation against the Mayor himself; he told him that he was exercising an earthly power, that he was living in sin with his wife; he invited him to spiritualise himself; he removed the *rucksack* and emptied its contents on the table: a loaf of bread, an ointment for keeping the hair curled, a Gothic grammar, the Little Flowers of St. Francis, and a drama in five acts, called Arius. In Miradois' version the heresiarch Arius, while denying the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of

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the Trinity, confers on the Aryan race, which has reached its highest expression in the German people, the sole agency for the transaction of celestial business on earth, and makes the Teutonic Christ official representative of the Aryan idea.

The necessary papers for Miradois' extradition had already been prepared, and had been approved by the Subprefect. But after that conversation at the Town Hall the Mayor became convinced that Miradois was really mad and decided that it would be wrong to extradite him, and that he ought to remain on Capri. It is true that reasons of public order demanded the extradition of Miradois, but there were reasons of a higher order which made his detention on the island advisable. Aesthetic reasons above all, but also reasons of a humanitarian nature: if he had been hounded out of Capri, abandoned to himself, in another country, Miradois might possibly have regained his reason. At Capri, on the other hand, where he was already an ornament to the landscape, he was perfectly in tune with his surroundings.

As soon as it was settled that he should remain at Capri, Miradois unexpectedly decided to leave, on account of the cow.

Nobody knew that Miradois had a cow in Germany until that moment; he himself had forgotten it; he had left it as a calf in Pomerania. He must have felt some sudden pang of remorse. The memory of that cow came back to his mind, and he went. Later, in the poem *Heimkehr* he tells of his return to his native land:

*In deutscher Heimat, wo als Knabe
er Uhland las und Hebbel-Baabe,
fand wieder er, bei sanfter Ruhe
sein grösster Schatz, die deutsche Kuhe*

To-day at Capri, nothing remains of Miradois but his memory and the Institute, which he decided to make public property. Before leaving he handed it over officially, to the Mayor. To the act of consignment Miradois appended an

THAT CAPRI AIR



inventory of the Hospice; four beds of limestone; eight pillows, some of sand some of rock; four walls, including three of rock, and a radiator (the Sun, the Golden Syphon of which Marinetti speaks). The use of a well of water that is almost drinkable but far too dirty to wash in, is included in the donation.

The Hospice can house four pilgrims: one, the strongest, can sleep inside if the smell of goats does not disturb him; another on the roof and two more can lie in crevices in the rocks.

The Sun and the Air of Capri witnessed this act of consignment.





MARINETTI



MARINETTI made one big mistake: he came to Capri too late, he came when he had already become famous—a world celebrity.

There are many world-celebrities in Capri, but they are all manufactured locally, people whose fame has not spread beyond the island's three mile limit. As soon as a great man's reputation reaches the mainland he is disqualified.

It is a pity that Marinetti was well known all over the world before he came to Capri; because, otherwise, with his commanding genius he might have made quite a stir on the island. If only he had landed here twenty years ago, when Ulysses was still in bad odour, Marinetti would have flung him overboard together with all the ballast of Greeks and Romans; if he had arrived in time, Tiberius would never have been rehabilitated; and the Sirens, Circe, Penelope and the Sybil would have found respectable employment in a *café-concert*. We needed Marinetti before the real Roman ruins had been demolished to make way for those that are recognised in guide-books.

It seems a pity that a man who had all the makings of a perfect Capri type should merely have become a universal type instead.

When Marinetti passes through the streets of Capri you can easily guess that he is a world celebrity. Nobody takes any notice of him. At the most somebody asks: Who is that fellow? What does he do?

That is what happens to all famous men on Capri. Masaryk strolls down the street, and somebody asks:

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"Who's that?"

"It is President Masaryk."

"Ah, yes . . . but what is he doing *here*?"

Masaryk does nothing in Capri, or almost nothing; in his own country he has made Czecho-Slovakia; in Capri he just bathes.

"And that other chap, who is he?"

"Max von Baden."

"Max von *what*?"

"A foreign celebrity: the last Chancellor of the German Empire; the opposite of Bismarck you might call him. Bismarck made the Empire; Max un-made it, and now he is resting on Capri."

In Capri we prefer our celebrities made on the spot. Is it surprising that, when Marinetti passes through the Capri streets, people ask: Who is that fellow?

* * * * *

One shouldn't ask who Marinetti is. It is a grammatical mistake: one should ask, in the plural, who they are.

Because the name and the man are both plural: the name Marinetti is obviously plural; it is more than the name of a man, it is the name of a multitude, the sign of a race and the designation of a species—a multitude, a race and a species which are fused into one Marinetti. The name is plural, but the man is most singular, the exponent of a factor which is himself:

$$(m \times m)^n = M$$

Or is he not perhaps an integral?—for example, that quantity which integrates art, politics and poetry—all Italian intellect in the name of one man?

The first rules of the differential calculus teach us that the condition of integrality is reducible to a constant P (may not that stand for Pastism?) but, with a curious appositeness, the calculus also tells us that when the condition of integrality cannot be solved by a constant, it can be obtained by multiplying the whole equation by the integrating factor M .

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That simplifies everything; this integrating factor, which the calculus discreetly indicates with an initial, is decidedly Marinetti. Pastism is a constant, therefore it does not answer to our condition of integrality; Italy, at a certain moment, found her integrating factor: MARINETTI.

Very well—this multiple *M* arrived in Capri. But which, and how many Marinettis were there?

The man of letters, the poet, the artist? The bomber, the machine gunner, the artillery man who, 'twixt the trenches of the Astico and the Assa, became an improvised conductor of orchestral concerts, and taught the heavies, the howitzers and the field-guns to sing a chorus of calibres?

Or is it the revolutionary Marinetti, who in 1915 at Milan, threw up his barricades and cuffed and kicked the Italian nation to make it listen to d'Annunzio's speeches in favour of the war? Or is it the fascist of 1919—when the first fascio of fascists numbered a few dozen—the Marinetti who held at bay a horde of thousands of communists with fists and revolver-bullets? All these Marinettis come to Capri, and many others besides: the Italo-French orator, the Pontifex Maximus of Savini's café, the Milanese propagandist for whose sake the Futurists of Vladivostock or Odessa had their throats cut by the Bolsheviks. He is the hermit of the Forest of Viggiù. The real anarchist who has gone beyond the revolution of Bombacci and Barberis (which never took place) to give us the revolution of Futurism (which takes place every hour).

He is the exalter of the steel point, the iron ram—the aluminium wing—of all the machines that serve to penetrate, to tear and to climb; he is the aviator who sent the Pope up in an aeroplane.

He is the author of thirty or forty books, a surgical romance, and heavens knows how many poems and manifestoes. He is the murderer of moonlight; the motorist whose licence has been endorsed for exceeding the literary speed limit; he is the bard of the Siege of Adrianople, the discoverer of the Carnal City, the puppet-master of the electric dolls, the hygienist of the world, who prescribes disinfection by war.

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He is also a Bachelor of the Sorbonne, the learned pupil of the Jesuits of Alexandria, who founded at the age of fifteen a journal called *Papyrus*; the poet of Africa, the dramatist who accompanied his tragedy of the black race by a thunder of drums and tom-toms.

He is the trainer of free words, the apostle of free syntax, the inventor of a hundred spasmodically comic phrases; he has packed off all Gods—but one: "*Les Dieux s'en vont, d'Annunzio reste.*" He is the orthopædist who has invented a new disease—classic wryneck—and amuses himself by curing a chronic deformity in the necks of Pastists.

* * * * *

When you have explained all this in Capri they still ask you: "But who is this Marinetti?"

Then you have to begin all over again; but they do not understand until Marinetti explains himself.

He speaks with the self-possession of a machine gun, introducing jets of metaphor into the quick fire of his figures; the landslides of his similes drag in their wake mountainous masses of paradox.

He assaults the vulgar herd. When with an armour-piercing shell of enormous calibre he has torn open the waterline belt of Pastism, he discharges from the launching tube of his mouth torpedoes which, one by one, crash through the water-tight compartments of the Classicist, of the bourgeois and of the Philistine.

It is then that the hulls of all consciences accustomed to float upon the stagnant waters of established fact, historical truth and settled commonplace, that dreadnoughts anchored in the dead sea of conventionality, unvexed by tempests of thought or storms of ideas, take a list, and shudder, and roll, and are overwhelmed by wave on wave of torrential words.

Marinetti does not stop; he raves over the wreckage, he crushes the shattered superstructure of good sense, and with a logic which has about as much delicacy as a steam hammer, he

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drives his arguments into the listener's brain with the assiduity of compressed air in a riveting-machine.

* * * * *

Marinetti came to Capri for the Conference on the Capri Landscape, arranged by our late lamented Curator of Natural Beauties. It was a moonlight night. There from a platform which had the Odyssean Sea for background, he spoke to a people sick with three thousand years of chronic classicism.

Let us kill the moonlight, forswear our classical wryneck, and listen to Marinetti! He speaks, but an orator of the old school, a famous orator—the Wizard of Words, they call him—had preceded him. The Wizard of Words is a rather wordy wizard. He has recalled traditions, lingered on legends, and freshened with his Pæan of Mediterranean Beauty, the island's mouldy antiquity. The Wizard has sculptured a monumental, formal speech; its gigantic shape is rounded in periods that fold and unfold, twine and untwine, shot with the twisting golden thread of a thought with which the robe that cloaks the perfection of his eloquence is embroidered in luminous, iridescent phosphorescent figures of speech.

The atmosphere is pregnant with classic humour, the air is thick with orphic memories and heavy with myths, the island is still shaken by the passions of Ulysses, vibrating with the Hellenic fervour of Goethe, tremulous with the spasmodic emotion of Jean Paul Richter, murmurous with the sighs of Byron and Shelley. The Wizard has finished and Marinetti speaks. He announces, first of all, that the island is not dead—it has not been buried beneath a mound of millennial tradition, nor has it rotted in the stagnant pond of history. It is alive. It has only just been born and has received, or is about to receive, its first vital impulse in the motive force of the futurist idea.

As Marinetti speaks, each crag that looms above an abyss loosens its roots and crashes precipitately downward; great boulders, projecting from the precipice, lose balance and fall like thunder into the deep.

The whole sea boils like an enormous cauldron licked by



the flames of submarine volcanoes; over its surface waver metallic reflections that clothe with an iridescent shimmer the waves that leap in this chaotic bacchanal.

A hundred overhanging limestone crags, proud of their perpendicularity, become privileged terraces for suicides; craters erupting lava flaming with anti-classical fury, gape in the flanks of precipices and rugged chasms.

The blue of the sea, the blue of the sky, the blue of the rocks—all the blues of Capri, blue, blue, blue; the green of the shrubs, the green of the Scotch kilts which the rocks wear, the green of the marine grottoes, all the green of Capri, green, green, green; the blue and the green acquire the pasty consistency of a cosmetic, they become at the same time oily and viscous, lubricating and clogging the wheels of a fancy that spins eccentrically on a mad axle.

The sky mantles with purple fit for a tourney of clouds, it seems to swallow the sun whose throat has been cut and whose blood has reddened the west; the anæmic moon feels that her end is near.

* * * * *

But Marinetti must convince himself that Capri will not be futurised in moonlight. What he really needs is the sun, the golden syphon that shall decant his ideas. One day he went to the Cala di Matromania, where all the solar essence of the island is concentrated. Lingered near the Grotto of Mithras—but Marinetti did not know that it was the Grotto of the old solar deity—he seemed to hear a voice. It was the voice of Miradois, the Teutonic Christ of Capri, who is always ambushed near the door of his disused goat-shed. Marinetti was not aware of Miradois but Miradois was immediately aware of Marinetti, and scented a proselyte: a fine, well set up fellow with strong sinews, the very type that he needed for his propaganda. . . . Imagine Marinetti in the gown of a Franciscan pilgrim, with a fine pastoral staff and a naked child in his arms, a feeding bottle in one hand and on its shoulders a *rucksack* containing the Bible, the Little Flowers of St. Francis and the

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Catechism of Buddha! This must have been the vision that enchanted Miradois, and made him shout to Marinetti from the mouth of the rocky cave in which his disused stable is half hidden.

"Stay, pilgrim. . . ."

Marinetti did not hear or did not understand that voice. He had only arrived in Capri a few days before and his first glance had shown him the immense evil from which the island was suffering. Its very nature, so obviously, so powerfully anti-classic, had been violated. Capri lay strangled and suffocated in the fell grip of three thousand years of history. It had been throttled by the myth of Odysseus; its beauty was blotted by the mould of tradition; even Monte Solaro, in a spasm of classical wryneck, looked toward Rome.

It was only on the infernal cliffs of Tragara and Matro-mania that any symptoms of telluric revolt appeared. There, it is true, the island seemed to offer herself passionately to the promise of the iconoclast's embrace, recapturing the soft and fiery raptures that fierce convulsion with which the phlegrean conflagration divided her from the African continent, in another ardour, completer and more significant.

Marinetti remained immovable on his rock, lost in contemplation; then seized by a paroxysm of revolt he began to declaim on the necessity of immediate, dynamic action.

" . . . renounce life! Stay thy steps, wanderer!" Miradois chanted. But Marinetti did not hear him. A tide of invective and prophecy carried him onward:

" . . . thou wilt move, thou movest, I will move thee, Capri! The renewing fire of a new life shall shape thy new destiny as once the phlegrean fires fixed, geologically, thy tumultuous, lyric, turbulent, rebellious forms. This voluptuous sea shall break the anchors that chain thee to the past, and the impetus of my fancy shall shatter thee like an explosive. Thy limestone soul shall be shattered and every splinter of thy motionless rock shall be scattered over the blue sky till, kindled to white heat by our futurist ardour, it shall light a thousand suns more splendid and more burning than this.

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O restless crags, greedy for revolving propellers of aeroplanes whirring in a tourney of meteoric aviation: O, hurtling boulders, burning to be decomposed and dislocated, then re-embodyed and dynamized by the brushes of our futurist painters, I want to crush and pulverise and reduce you to an ointment for the nerves of all those sick with classicism, so that they may taste your sharp, calcareous and fiery colour-flavour.

Oh, island plastically futuristic left on the side-track of the Past, at the last station of normality, I, I, Marinetti, will make you burst—Fsssch . . . Rssr . . . ta-ta-ta pim pom boom . . . devour, rip open, jostle the flying clouds, then fly, fly, fly over the fiery rails of golden sun-rays——”

“Stay, traveller,” Miradois repeated, lifting joined hands to heaven as for the elevation of a host—“Within this Sanctuary . . .”

“ . . . yes, in this Sanctuary of every dynamic divinity, on this impressionist sea-palette, thou shalt, O tonsured one, under thy white stole of limestone, perform the mystic elevation of a sacrament offered to the sun . . . a wafer tremblingly balanced on the golden cord of a sunray, of a thousand rays, rays, rays. Rays which hammer and pound and rivet a hull-skull for endless voyages . . . rocks galloping, leaping, staggering, pursuing like fossil crocodiles that rear as they go struggling, volumes that foam in the cauldron of chaos, whirlpools of stone — caverns — caves — chasms — megaphones — trumpets — cannons — mortars — torpedoes — percussion caps — cartridges — shells — heavy howitzers — grenades — ordnance: anti-submarine—anti-air-craft, of approach, attack, of siege, of bombardment — probosces of rock from which burst breasts spraying stars, asteroids, planets, cosmic dust on the milky way of a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand universes, fertilizing obelisks that penetrate calcareous cavities, matrices of corrugated iron, fossilized shivers, dolomite peaks of the Carso, volcanic and telluric bradycisms . . . ”

And he would have continued for half an hour and might

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even possibly have completed his sentence if he had not noticed that just above him, at the mouth of the grotto, the followers of Miradois had gathered around their master for a course of Pangermanic propaganda.

Marinetti did not know that they were Miradois's disciples, but he guessed that they were foreigners, those foreigners who depreciate the victory of Vittorio Veneto, who do not acknowledge the superiority of Italian genius. So Marinetti continued in French:

"Pierres de Capri, blanches comme les ossements de nos héros, rochers titaniques, synthèse géologique, plastique, dynamique de notre péninsule volcanique, symbole de notre race, de notre sang turbulent glorieux, image de notre esprit créateur, artiste, futuriste . . . Apothéose du Carso. . . ."

But once more he was interrupted: the disciples of Miradois began to intone their mournful chant, and from the Grotto of Matromania came the slow and solemn waves of a song of evil omen:

*Deutschland Deutschland über Alles
Über Alles in der Welt—*

while Miradois beating time with his pilgrim's staff, recited the last verses of his song:

*. . . e tu farai
Del mio canzone il tuo canzone.*

At last Marinetti had met prehistoric man!

* * * * *

Next morning—when all the futurism was past, when Marinetti had left her—Capri woke early, at dawn, as she always awakes.

The harvest moon which had been tarrying on her heavenly course, saw that she was late and feared she would be surprised by her rough husband the sun, so she took a short

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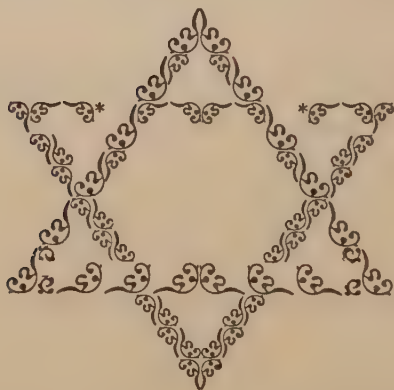


cut through the milky way, and when she reached the brow of Monte Solaro, began to roll down the mountain slope toward the sea.

The lazy Faraglioni woke late and stretched their old stone crocodile tails, then dived into the sea, to await the artists who came to paint them. Old Spadaro arrived on the Piazza and leaned against the fifth cement column waiting for the young American ladies to come and photograph him.

Two Swedish masochists, a Bavarian theosophist and a Nature Man began to gossip under the campanile; Weber passed by with his *Laocoon-Artistic Courier* under his arm, on the way to Morgano's, where he always leaves it.

At eight o'clock from sheer force of habit, Cicione the municipal firework-maker let off a salvo of bombs in honour of some saint or other. Marinetti had left the island and Capri took up again the eternal rhythm of its own private life.





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MARSTON, who later should have become Lord Bexley, is famous for the story of the Four Holes. Those four holes are all that is left of him. Physically Marston is dead. Spiritually he survives in the type of which he was the most signal ornament: that of the Reformer.

Now in these days the efforts of our reformers pass almost unnoticed because there are so many of them, and competition is so keen. Consider, for instance, the Buddhistic Variety. It is rampant as a weed, yet hardly anyone would have known of its existence if one of our German philosophers had not applied it to the new eliministic method of painting. This method, as everyone knows, begins, like cubism and expressionism, with the elimination of drawing; then you eliminate colour and all the other threadbare devices of pictorial convention. To be brief, you paint nothing. Painting becomes a philosophico-religious mental process, in which you concentrate on the Four Fundamental Truths of Buddhism and finally attain Nirvana. Next comes the Franciscan Variety, affected by Miradois, and devoted to the propagation of post-war Pangermanism; an extrinsication of the dreams of the poor man of Assisi attuned to the theory of Treitschke. Add to these the Theosophical Variety, practised by the Psychoanalytical Group of Ascona; the Monoplastic Variety; the Movement for the Restoration of Monogamy; the Movement for the Vegeto-mineral Reform of National Dietary; the Agitation in Favour of Calisthenic Dances. . . . Why, Wolff, the Introspectivist, is actually elaborating an immense programme for the plastic representation of secret physiological functions; and a Princess—from the



Ukraine—has founded a school for the Rhythmical Education of the Abdominal Muscles.

But all these movements, all these reforms, are the products of an over-sensitive culture. Thirty or forty years ago, in Marston's time, we were only beginning. That was an age of crude, simple ideals, in which our reformers concerned themselves only with matters of morals and religion.

The first of them, Count Pappengut, was essentially a Religious Reformer. It was he who introduced into Capri the ceremony of Baptism by Total Immersion as practised by John the Baptist, since whose day none but he has performed the authentic rite. Pappengut purchased the convent of the Tere-sian nuns at Anacapri, and turned it into an establishment lavishly supplied with all the necessary bathing appliances. In the fonts of his baptistry scores of converts were immersed; by a whole series of lustrations he purged their souls and bodies of Papistry. The parish priest of those days, Don Roberto Canale, emulated and rivalled the Count. By threats, persuasions, excommunications, he repossessed himself of the bodies of all Pappengut's converts and rebaptized them in the Catholic Church; but the rebaptized of Capri always returned to a fourth baptism in Anacapri. The Count was ready to pay a handsome transfer-fee on any number of changes in the Evangelical direction.

Poor Pappengut squandered a fortune on his reforms, but another reformer of those days, a certain Mr. Mildes, was more practical. Mr. Mildes, being an acute observer, noticed that all the English Protestants who came to Capri at certain seasons of the year, became infected with a strange religious fervour. In spring and winter, when it was not too hot to pray, they imported an Evangelical pastor to minister to their spiritual needs. But in the days of Mr. Mildes there was no Protestant church; so he decided to build one.

First he collected funds. With these he bought land, and built a house to suit his fancy. And then, behind it, with the money that remained, he erected a little church. The end-product of Mr. Mildes's reform was an elegant hotel.



But all this by the way. A mere preface to the reform of Marston, Capri's greatest and most original reformer.

Marston, Lord Bexley, was not the first of his line. His name was glorious in the annals of English aristocracy; his antecedents are recorded in Debrett; but the story of Marston at Capri and Marston's four holes—which is not recorded—is more interesting than that of the Bexley Peerage. Marston came to Capri in the reign of Queen Victoria. His four holes are in the style of the Victorian Era; they are informed, that is to say, by that Era's moral mentality. They remain, to this day, in a perfect state of preservation. They are to be found at the Villa Castello and constitute its mystery.

Now Villa Castello has always been a mysterious house. At the time of the Venerable Sister Seraphina, the founder of the Teresian convent suppressed by Murat in 1808, Villa Castello was the convent's guest-house. Eighty years later it became the abode of Sophie Anderson, a distinguished Victorian painter, renowned, in England, for her classical correctness, and at Capri for a white coiffure, arranged in the shape of a cauliflower. She was called, in fact, the Lady with the Cauliflower.

This Mrs. Anderson had one inconvenience; a husband, who was called the Husband of the Lady with the Cauliflower, or, sometimes, Carraciello. He, too, was a personality; yet, both as artist and husband, his wife overshadowed him. For she was a great painter, who measured five foot ten; while he was a small one, and five foot five at most.

Even in her artistic capacity Mrs. Anderson was a reformer. If ever there existed an art full of "uplift," an art that moderated unruly passions, an art that scourged vice and inculcated virtue, that was the art of Mrs. Anderson. Her whole artistic output was nothing but a hymn to Propriety in Clothing.

From the artistic point of view a most original aim. And since, at Capri all originality has, sooner or later, the success that it deserves, Mrs. Anderson's artistic ideal succeeded, exercising such a beneficent influence over the Best Capri Society that it became completely reformed. In the days of Sophie Anderson the Best Capri Society simply didn't know



itself. It was composed entirely of the very nicest people.

As a painter Mrs. Anderson was justly renowned for her flesh. None has ever excelled the flesh that Mrs. Anderson painted in the manner of her epoch. She painted the nude; and the flesh of Mrs. Anderson's nudes had every attribute of human flesh except those that make for the damnation of humanity. It was like a denicotinized cigar, decaffeinated coffee, like non-alcoholic whisky, like herbal beer. A bowdlerized flesh, that had no carnal savour.

The nudes which Mrs. Anderson painted (she always painted nudes) could never, for example, have been confounded for one moment with those of Rubens or Titian. Mrs. Anderson's flesh had the subdued modesty of frozen meat. It was healthy, cool, rosy: never, thank heaven, appetizing! How different from the flesh of the great sensual masters of the Cinquecento, or even from that of the modern cubists and pointillists which has the obscene plasticity of a geometrical appreciation of solids, or the crude, luminous indecorum of a naked state of mind! No, Mrs. Anderson painted the nude with such regard for good manners that her pagan figures might have been the fruit of an Immaculate Conception. There was nothing human about them. The English have a technique of the nude that is all their own. They paint the draped nude divinely. An Athena, as we southerners paint her, reveals at once the immodest preoccupations of our race. An English Britannia never shows herself in public with less than six yards of gabardine, British manufacture: guaranteed all wool.

Now the famous Aphrodite of Mrs. Anderson represents the goddess at the precise moment when she is being born from the foam of the sea. It is almost all foam. So cool, so innocent, that it might serve as an appropriate advertisement for Schweppé's Dry Ginger Ale. Compare this picture with the Aphrodites that befoul the Paris Salon every year! They go foaming to your head like Moët and Chandon. You might almost imagine that Veuve Clicquot had posed for them in person. But here, in Capri, Mrs. Anderson painted Aphrodite, Iphigenia, Phryne, Circe, Penelope, the Cumæan Sibyl, Lisia,



Parthenope, Leucosia, Amaryllis, Daphne; refashioning the whole world of classical female figures with a brush that had the virtue of an aspergillum. All these figures were draped in flowing veils whose modesty made them free of Burlington House. And even the fact that she employed her own cook as a model did not prevent that lady from remaining the most devout of women.

Now this may sound like another digression. On the contrary, it forms the very foundation of the story of Marston's four holes; for in those four holes and in Mrs. Anderson's nudes the two movements which first re-established and then disintegrated the morality of the island reached their culmination. They represent the poles of one reform and the equator of another; a reform and a counter-reform of which nothing now remains but Marston's Four Holes.

To understand the importance or even the significance of Marston's four holes one is forced to recall the deplorably Improper Clothing of Capri fifty years ago. In those days the island's morality had descended to abysses unplumbed by the German mark. Of course, in those days, there was no Pro-Capri Society, so that moral statistics are lacking. And perhaps that is a good thing; for if statistics had been available nobody could have surveyed them without terror. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward Capri had become an island Montmartre. Artists gathered there from every corner of the globe, and led a scandalous, in other words, an amusing life. They danced the tarantella and the tarascone with village girls, coral-sellers, donkey-women; painters, occasionally, married their models. And yet, in those days, no organisation tabulated the island's attractions. To-day, as everyone knows, the Pro-Capri Society furnishes daily meteorological reports; it even provides a series of morality-graphs, so that you can ascertain, at any given moment, its sexual pressure, its erotic temperature, its curve of polygamic variation. But at the time of Mrs. Anderson every enquirer into these matters had to go by instinct. And when Mrs. Anderson came to Capri her instinct told her that things were in a bad way.



She conceived it her mission in life to better them; she determined to make Capri respectable. Unfortunately it is difficult to lead a life that is at the same time respectable and amusing. Either one is respectable or else one is amusing and interesting; so Mrs. Anderson began her campaign by declaring war on all interesting and amusing people and gathering to her banner all the respectable elements in the English colony.

Now the English colony at Capri was a distinct social class composed partly of those who found their native island unhealthy—for reasons as various as a weak chest or a threatened prosecution for bigamy—and partly of economic exiles; people, in other words, who could not afford to be dissolute in their own country and so came to live puritanically in this. This colony embraced all the Best Capri Society at the time of Mrs. Anderson.

Every year, in summer, the Best Capri Society foregathered at the Villa Castello for a private view of Mrs. Anderson's pictures. It was a twofold orgy: an orgy of the nude—in the English variety—which was submitted to the judgment of the Best Capri Society before braving public opinion at the Royal Academy, and an orgy of strawberries and cream. Mrs. Anderson modestly called it a garden-party.

In the year which Marston made signal by his reform, everyone, down to the last respectable member of Capri Society, was invited to Mrs. Anderson's garden-party. Marston was not invited. Marston was a bad hat, a drinker, a rake. In point of face, an amusing and interesting type.

Marston was not invited. So he invited himself.

He came, a little late, at a point when the party had attained its zenith of puritanical animation. He came when the Protestant pastor, the seasoned spinsters, the daughters of half-pay officers, the undertakers' widows—when all the colony, already glutted with the classic nude, were immersed in their strawberries and cream.

Marston came and knocked at the outer door of the Villa Castello, in which, as yet, there were not Four Holes. If there

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had been only one of them the maid who answered his knock could have averted the scandal. But the holes were not there; and, for this reason, Carmelina, the maid, neglected to look through them. She opened the door and fainted.

Marston was naked.

And naked he appeared before the Best Capri Society.

All the ladies bolted their strawberries and cream and followed Carmelina's example. Marston was a bad hat; but not a bad figure of a man, and his nude was totally different from the classic nudes that Mrs. Anderson painted.

There was a panic. The company lost their heads: every one of them except Carraciello, Mrs. Anderson's husband. He showed such coolness that the blood must surely have frozen in his veins. He rose—or rather fell—at once to the baseness of the situation. He took Marston firmly, and led him to the door. He closed the door behind him and locked it.

Then Carraciello had a flash of genius. It was the only one he ever had in his life, but its flame is sufficient to illuminate his history with a light that flares like a beacon in the dark annals of Capri.

Carraciello went to his workshop. He took an auger and drilled Four Holes in the outer door of the Villa Castello,

The Four Holes of Marston, Lord Bexley, the English peer.

* * * * *

The story of Marston, Lord Bexley, as a Capri reformer, began with the affair of the Four Holes. Unhappily it ended there. Because, when he was put to the door of the Villa Castello in all his nakedness, the poor fellow caught a cold.

And he died, a few days later, of *delirium tremens*.





DANSE MACABRE



THE first non-catholic cemetery at Capri, beneath the Castiglione, with its few tombs scattered among groups of cypresses, and overgrown by roses gone wild and heavy tufts of flaming oleander—the first protestant cemetery, as they called it, assumed, under the guardianship of Don Biagio Maltese, a certain air of dissolute gaiety appropriate to the life of the foreign colony whose refuge it became in death. It lay there, isolated and abandoned, in soil unconsecrated; but no mere lack of consecration could explain the frivolous aspect of the place. Now, since the Scandal, we know that Don Biagio had a hand in that; for though it was simply as custodian of the cemetery that he drew his pay, he was also a humorist. And it was as a humorist that they pensioned him.

When Don Biagio was first appointed to his office he found that, for the purpose of housing protestants, the place was not so bad. Its occupants had before them all the magnificence of the Gulf of Naples; proud-plumed Vesuvius and Parthenope, the garner of all Hellenic tradition, soft-dreaming on the horizon; the Phlegræan fields, ablaze with Southern sunlight, and beyond them, islands of opal and sapphire, shining like jewels against the gentle line of the Campanian coast steeped in the mythical and historic memories of paganism. A portentous landscape, crystallized in shapes of unique beauty, as if obedient to some supernal rhythm of perfection. Yet, if you gaze on it too long, a landscape that takes to itself a stereoscopic, an almost ghostly quality: for is it not, after all, the ghost of the pagan world? Even the dead—even the protestant dead—end



by dreading this vision; and if those who were buried under the Castiglione did not end with fear they must surely have ended with boredom at the solitude, the immobility, the awful stability of everything that surrounded them.

Don Biagio had lived so intimately with the dead that he understood their psychology: he had been guardian of another cemetery from which he had been dismissed, nobody knew why, and now he found himself among all these foreigners, lying there far from their native lands, probably forgotten, and, most certainly abandoned. . . .

That is how foreigners are. Where you bury them, there they stay. Among foreigners you never find that cult of mortality which keeps dead images alive by a continual confusion of transference from one place to another; from an ordinary tomb to a private niche, from a niche to an elaborate chapel. Exhumation, as it is practised in the most modest Italian cemetery, may be numbered among the fine arts, and the mortuary adjustments of our meanest village resemble a futurist poem, with a movement, a vivacity (Marinetti would call it a necroscopic dynamism) which are inherent in our vital, artistic, creative, revolutionary, explosive race. Foreigners, as I've already suggested, stay where they're put. And Don Biagio, who was accustomed to Italian methods, introduced a certain liveliness into the non-catholic cemetery.

They still call it the *Camposanto Inglese*, though, as a matter of fact, it was always international. In it were buried a mixture of protestants: artists, poets, drunkards and blackguards of every race. If, as rarely happened, a foreigner died in decent circumstances, his relatives had him embalmed and took his body home. Embalmmment, so called, consisted of the simple injection of carbolic acid into the jugular vein. This, at any rate, was the usual method. But after the death of Lord Wister, from *Delirium Tremens*, a new process, which the doctors jokingly called Wister's method, was invented. In such cases the doctors did nothing, for the subjects had obligingly embalmed themselves before death by alcoholic saturation.

A point of importance: because, in those days, the Capri



doctors, who were four in number, had formed themselves into an embalming syndicate, and the bodies of their patients were divided into four equal parts. Suppose embalmment cost a thousand liras; that meant two hundred and fifty each for the doctors. A rigid professional etiquette controlled their relations with living and dead alike: up till the moment of death all patients were private property; afterwards they belonged to the syndicate as a whole.

But supposing, you may ask, the sick man grew worse or his doctor blundered, so that his relatives took fright and asked for a consultation?

"We're sorry . . ." said the other doctors; but as long as the patient lived they wouldn't touch him. As soon as he became comatose his attendant was compelled by delicacy to suggest a consultation himself.

"I have colleagues," he would say. "The responsibility is too heavy. My conscientious scruples demand . . ."

And shortly afterwards the four doctors met over the patient's corpse for the purpose of consultation. And embalmment. But this only happened in the case of prosperous foreigners; and since these were rare, you will realise that the thousand lire tariff, even in those days, was not excessive.

But others were buried in the English cemetery. It was called thus because the English have always held a majority, a controlling interest, on the committee of management. It was they who appointed Don Biagio Maltese as Custodian. After the great scandal they tried to pass it off by saying that they didn't know he was a humorist. He looked so serious!

It was perfectly true. His appearance was gravity incarnate. They selected him because they wanted to introduce a note of order into Capri burials. After Mrs. Anderson's reforms Capri had been engulfed in a tidal wave of morality. Its victims drifted one by one to the protestant cemetery. Most of them were English: evidences of the controlling interest. Even in death Don Biagio found them spleenful, dyspeptic, affected, formal, correct. No doubt they bored him: no doubt he sometimes found himself sighing: "Where are the dead of yester-



year?" Was it this change of type that disconcerted Don Biagio and infected him with the curious aberrations of conduct which later made him famous?

Nobody knows. All we know is that in the days of his custodianship the shuffling movement began. Suppose a protestant clergyman's widow died? Don Biagio put her in the tomb of an Irish colonel. Afterwards, at the time of the inquiry, they found as many as three widows in the grave of an American who had spent the last ten years of his life in a crusade for the Re-establishment of Monogamy on Capri. Nobody ever knew—even after the inquiry—exactly how Don Biagio went to work. We know that he started on the burial register, exchanging the little glazed tablets which bore the numbers of the tombs, and passing from this to an odd exhumation here and there on his own account. To be brief: within the space of a few years he managed to change the name, age, sex, profession, political opinions and religious faith of the whole defunct foreign colony of Capri. And the best of it is that for years on end nobody ever tumbled to it. Nobody would ever have known to the end of time if it hadn't been for the case of Lord Wister.

Lord Wister, like many another distinguished foreigner, lived—and died—on Capri in *Delirium Tremens*. As long as he lived nobody knew him as Lord Wister. He called himself Mr. Tennyson. It was only two days after his burial that his friends, rummaging in his papers, discovered that he was, in fact, the eldest son of the Earl of Falkland. They guessed, however, that he was out of favour, and did not even telegraph to his family, who had disowned his society and would certainly have refused to own his remains. Nevertheless, they decided to have him embalmed and sent home together with his bills.

Wister had left a number of bills unpaid, and his creditors, between them, financed the undertaking. They appointed Mangano, the hotel-keeper, to accompany the corpse to London: for the Falklands were a noble family, and would certainly pay the bills, the costs of embalmment and trans-

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portation, and something more for the trouble that Mangano had taken. The doctors decided that embalment was superfluous. Wister, they said, was safe to keep for a month or two. The bill for whisky alone amounted to nine hundred liras.

Mangano ordered a zinc shell and instructed Don Biagio to exhume the coffin.

Afterwards—after Mangano's return from London—they actually accused Don Biagio of having done it on purpose. They said that he'd done it out of spite, for political reasons, that he'd been bought over by the opponents of Mangano, who was mayor-elect, with the idea of discrediting him and running him in for the expenses of the journey. Until the day of his death Don Biagio maintained that it was nothing but a mistake. He admitted that he had exchanged Wister's number on the register with that of Miss Julia Sisley Bayne, the American painter, who had died a week before Wister of fatty infiltration of the heart. But he'd forgotten all about it. He put it down to his eyes, which, as he said, were getting weaker and weaker every year. And, even if he hadn't forgotten, he certainly hadn't done it on purpose.

The important point is that when Lord Wister's family, who had made difficulties from the first, opened the coffin, and found themselves face to face with Miss Julia Sisley Bayne, they simply refused to take delivery of that lady or admit her to the family vault. And the Mortuary Authorities of London, to whom Mangano appealed, backed their opinion. Miss Bayne did not return to Capri. Mangano left her at Charing Cross, registered with a through ticket to Calais. He himself set off from Liverpool Street, and reached Capri *via* Flushing.

* * * * *

When the scandal was exposed and the Committee of the protestant cemetery met to consider the case, the English members were, for the first time, in a minority. The leader of the opposition, M. Laroche, the French dramatist, announced the fact and said: "Tiens, tiens!" with a wink at the treasurer, who was English. The treasurer, in the president's absence



said, speaking for himself and his absent colleagues, that such insinuations would not and should not be tolerated. It was absurd to foist the blame of an isolated incident on the Executive Committee, the majority of whom were respectable British subjects. If anyone were responsible, the responsibility should be defined. And in any case the Executive Committee and the Committee of General Management must dissociate themselves from the acts of their Custodian. As for Wister, he was in his place. . . .

"In Miss Bayne's," Laroche interrupted.

And as for Miss Bayne, the treasurer continued, it was ludicrous even to consider the possibility of her return. Unless somebody had claimed her, Miss Bayne, in all probability, was still lying in the station at Calais. A perfectly respectable station, he might add.

Laroche, supported by the Belgians, the Americans and the Russians, demanded an inquiry, the verification of all the tombs—or, at any rate the most recent—and the recognition of all coffins found out of place. The treasurer, speaking in the name of the Executive Committee, offered no objection.

The inquiry was sanctioned and begun. It was not prosecuted for long: for it was August, and the summer happened to be exceptionally hot. They began with the tomb of Sophie Anderson, and found in it the coffin of Marston, Lord Bexley. Next came the turn of Gherkin-head (he'd been buried under that nickname because no one knew his real name). Gherkin-head was that yellow-haired Danish violinist who explored the tunnel in the Blue Grotto with his wife, and was arrested for exemplary reasons, to show foreigners that, even on Capri, we draw the line somewhere. But he, too, wasn't in his tomb. In place of him they found Lady Cunningham, who wrote that commentary on Emma's private letters to Nelson.

They dug up another half-dozen, and found that every one was out of place. In No. 52—the registered resting-place of Blumenthal, the archæologist—they discovered the fiancé of the poet John Trellis and No. 37, the religious reformer, Mr. Mildes, had changed places with No. 93, a sadist from Mos-

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cow, while the gravestone of Van Kruger, a South African millionaire, had been transported to the tomb of the Parnassian poet, de Fleury. . . .

At last the Town Council put a stop to it. The Foreign Colony was beginning to make the island unpleasant.

Even the Executive Committee, who instituted and performed the inquiry, had had enough of it. They decided to dismiss Don Biagio. But that was easier said than done. Don Biagio had become old, he was almost deaf; cataracts had very nearly destroyed his sight; he had held the office of Custodian for the best part of a lifetime; his experience was monumental, and all Capri counted him a specialist at the job.

Some things he admitted, but not all. He admitted that, just to pass the time, as you might say, he had tampered with the burial register; that he had changed the numbers on most of the tombs, that he had even made a series of exhumations, for experimental reasons: to discover if it were true, as people said, that Capri air would preserve a corpse indefinitely. But afterwards he had put them all back where they belonged. He also swore—upon his eyesight—that they were all there, more or less. Nobody could reasonably expect him, an old man, who had sacrificed his whole life to the Protestant cemetery, and had contracted rheumatism to boot, to remember all the lot of them.

What if three or four coffins *had* been found in one tomb? How could they throw the blame on him? There was no more room in the cemetery. Nobody gave it a thought. They took no notice of it for months at a time. When he told them that there was no more room they simply said that it would come all right.

If it had "come all wrong," whose fault was that? They were all there . . . more or less. Miss Bayne? Well, she was the only one. That was the fault of the Cavaliere Mangano. Mangano had asked for a corpse to take to England with him, and he, Don Biagio had given him the best he had. . . . Why not even this Miss Bayne who had been entrusted to his charge was lost. No doubt she had arrived by that time at Calais



station and was likely to remain there. If any member of the Executive Committee wanted her, it was open to him to go and claim her. Cavaliere Mangano had kept the railway registration ticket.

So the Committee, being convinced that Don Biagio was merely a humorist, pardoned him. They even put him on a pension and kept him at his post, for they knew that he was the only man living who could find a way through the confusion he had created. And there he remained till the day of his death, a faithful, efficient and conscientious Custodian. If ever, as rarely happened, a visitor arrived at the Protestant cemetery with a wreath of flowers, Don Biagio could direct him without a moment's hesitation.

"Veronica Ladenski . . . the Polish ballet-dancer?" the visitor might ask.

"Yes, yes, I know," Don Biagio would answer, and then he would murmur to himself: "Red beard . . . Russian general . . . I know. The one that threw himself over the cliff. Here you are, sir; over there on the right, under that oleander."

For by that time he had become deaf as well as blind.

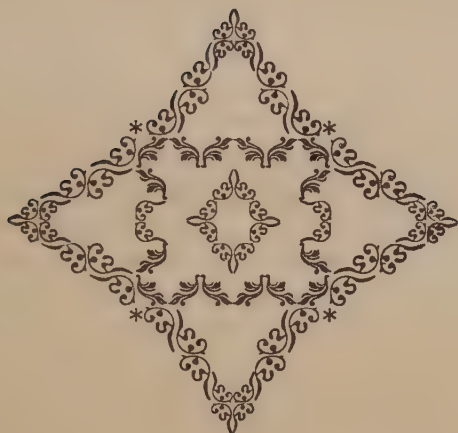
When Don Biagio died, the old Protestant Cemetery was no longer the mournful, melancholy place it once had been. Grass grew lush among the tombs; rambling ivy had covered all the stones; the oleanders flamed in the sun, and the wide, central avenue, which had become Don Biagio's kitchen-garden, supplied a note of tender gaiety between the dark walls of cypress with the fresh green of Don Biagio's famous early lettuces. For, in the years that preceded his death, the Custodian of the Protestant Cemetery devoted himself to gardening and supplied the whole of the foreign colony with spring vegetables.

That central avenue, with its neat little beds, was all put under salads, and hedged on either side with the gaudy marrow flower, whose clinging tendrils bedecked the neighbouring tombs with a drapery of richer green. All round them rioted a wealth of gay, exuberant bloom; great heads of purple stock,

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tall hollyhock stems, thickets of odorous vervain, masses of sweet basil, of rue, of mint, of tarragon and spikenard. . . .

A note of tender gaiety, I have said, which blended, in strange harmony, with the spirits of those dead men and women who, for thirty years and more, under Don Biagio's auspices, had exchanged secrets, and smiled together over the mysteries of the Capri foreign colony: that colony of artists and of poets, of drunkards and good fellows.



 THE HOSPITAL FOR
CHRONIC INVALIDS

VERY few people realise the amount of effort that has been applied to making Capri the first-rate health resort that it is to-day. It is not for nothing that its climate has been awarded gold medals in five exhibitions; that its winter minimum temperature puts Cairo's in the shade while its summer maximum puts St. Moritz on the Equator. Hardly anyone guesses what labour and sacrifice have been squandered in obtaining, from Monte Solaro, that radioactivity, the very mention of which sets the blood tingling in your veins and explains, incidentally, those curious spiritual phenomena that were once, erroneously, attributed to Capri air.

Now that Capri is a health resort, few people remember the decadence into which the island fell a score of years ago; only the medical profession, who had to bear the consequences. The crisis came unexpectedly; it even became an issue of party-politics, and the administration was openly accused of being responsible. But what could the poor administration do? The drainage was what it was, what it always has been and what it still is; the drinking water had remained unchanged. Even so, the crisis gradually developed. For a year or two nobody bothered about it. Then things began to go even worse. During one entire winter there was not a single case of pneumonia, and influenza became a mere memory. There were three able-bodied doctors, and amongst all of them together they could only manage to produce one solitary case of anthrax, two sore throats, one acute peritonitis and a slight



case of scarlatina among the foreign population. Of *Delirium Tremens* which had been endemic from time immemorial among the English colony, there was not a single case; the English colony drank mineral water and made it with powders of artificial Fiuggi and Montecatini at two sous the packet! As for embalmments . . . None had been done for two years; Don Giacinto Perla the chemist complained that his carbolic acid was going bad and losing its strength.

Winter passed, Spring passed, and when the doctors looked in at the pharmacy, Don Giacinto made that characteristic gesture of his, and repeated: "*Acqua alla pipa!*" But he did not lose heart. "As soon as the hot weather comes," he told them, "things will begin to look up."

But when the hot weather came things did not look up; in June and July there was always a case or two of typhoid. Don Giacinto held council at the door of the pharmacy: every year when he saw the baskets of fennel and Roman lettuce being unloaded before Isidore's shop, he winked at Dr. Savarese, Dr. Marziale and Don Ignazio, the other doctor. Shooting out his tongue as if his mouth were watering, he would exclaim: "*Typhus.*" Or when the water melons arrived on the vegetable cart, with shining eyes he whispered: "*Morbus Asiaticus!*" When he spoke with the doctors Don Giacinto always used Latin because he was of the old school and held that in professional relations with the medical profession the classic language should be used in order that laymen should not understand the facts.

But that year when Summer was advanced even Don Giacinto, always optimistic, began to despair. He had never dreamed of economy, he had invested his little capital in the most modern medicines; he had filled an entire window with French specialities, and had refurnished the pharmacy with oxygen and chloroform on the advice of Dr. Savarese, who always maintained that at Capri major surgery must be practised at all costs. The big bottle of chloroform was still unopened, and every morning when Savarese appeared, Don Giacinto threw him a glance of mingled supplication and

menace: "What about Major Surgery?" But Savarese was only longing for a chance to air his own grievances: "What they want here" — he said — "in this town of ignoramuses is barbers and phlebotomists—not surgeons!" And he was right. He had come to Capri to do plastic surgery and the people continued to use leeches. A girl to whom he had proposed the amputation of a breast for two cysts in the lacteal ducts, had been bled for them and shortly afterwards had taken up wet-nursing. Ignorant countryfolk!

But meanwhile what lean days! The pharmacy was reduced to a point at which its only visitor was Don Ignazio. The chemist was always sedulously polite, and tried to seduce him with his French specialities. Every morning he went out early to the Piazza to try and gather in an odd invalid.

"What a bad colour you have got this morning!" he would say, "I suppose it's the heat! Why don't you let Don Ignazio have a look at you? A great professor, with a clinical eye! And the visit won't cost anything."

"Don Igna'," said the chemist, "I rely upon you: the *Hydrolithia Bobin* is going bad . . . ten boxes still unsold! Look at this poor fellow here—show your tongue, idiot. Now don't you think that's cirrhosis of the liver?"

"And this child—you can see just what he needs. It's written all over him . . . Don Igna', sodium cacodilate, don't forget! . . . That tonic formula of Professor Cantani's . . ."

Imagine the efforts poor Don Giacinto used in finding ailments suitable for all the specialities going bad in his window!

Don Ignazio examined the patient, made him put out his tongue, felt his pulse, sounded his liver and became thoughtful. Then he produced his notebook and distractedly wrote a prescription in the old style:—*Recipe* . . .

But before he got any further Don Giacinto Perla began to gesticulate and make tragic signs of appeal until he had attracted Don Ignazio's attention. Then, with an entreating



glance and a groan which would have softened a heart of stone, he opened his arms with a movement which suggested chemical abundance and murmured loudly:

“Don Igna’, I rely on you: For God’s sake spread yourself a little! . . . ”

But Don Ignazio did not spread himself, he retired into the narrowness of his own spirit and prescribed the usual cough mixture.

For two or three years things went steadily from bad to worse. The doctors shook their heads together and the chemist cried that it was impossible to go on like this. Dr. Marziale assured them that they were now in *piena decadenza*, that the crisis had reached its most acute stage. The Committee of the Non-Catholic Burial Society threatened to close down the English Cemetery. Don Giacinto was on the verge of bankruptcy, and would certainly have failed if, at the crucial moment, he hadn’t been given the order to supply the *alchermes* for the official receptions at the Town Hall, and the contract for the disinfection of the streets, which cut both ways, because as soon as the streets were disinfected, the mild paratyphoid, which, up till then, had just kept him going, completely disappeared. Then Professor Scopa arrived from Rome, under the auspices of the Society for the Encouragement of Foreigners, and a year afterwards the first edition of the *Climate of Capri* appeared.

To-day a dozen doctors prosper on the island. Capri stands third and may soon be second among the radioactive centres of Europe; its climate has been awarded a gold medal in five exhibitions, and in its death rate it can compete with any of the most highly advertised health resorts in the world. What is more, it now has a Hospital for Chronic Invalids.



The first edition of the *Climate of Capri* is now out of print, or rather as Dr. Scopa’s adversaries maintain, was withdrawn from circulation by the author, when he realised that the meagre list of illnesses for which he had recommended the

island would not earn enough to keep the *hôtels de luxe* going. But in a second edition of a dozen reprints this error was corrected, and the climate of the island reached a therapeutic perfection: a mild winter temperature, and a cool summer—both rigorously kept within the minimum and maximum limits fixed by the Pro-Capri Society—abundant rainfall in the dry season and hardly any in the wet; an air whose co-efficient of humidity might have been calculated on purpose for articular rheumatism, and whose iodic salinity has reduced the gouty diathesis to a pastime. As for the radioactivity . . .

In the *Climate of Capri* the radioactivity is dealt with in a separate chapter, with a lyric spirit that makes it comparable to Ada Negri's *Capri Poems*.

We have now, in short, an ideal climate for every type of chronic invalid. At the time of the first edition, a chronic case coming to Capri could never hope to become acute; now the most acute forms of disease become chronic in twenty four hours. And yet, in spite of the climate, look what a fuss they made about the hospital! All out of spite against Canon Battisterio.

Because Canon Battisterio's activities had begun to make them think. When Don Gaudenzio first spoke to Mayor Veruotto about the Hospital for Chronic Invalids, Veruotto told him that he had already thought about it himself and made the Canon's proposal his own.

Up till then the Charity Organisation had managed to rub along more or less on the meagre income derived from its funds, maintaining three or four employees who did their best. Then unexpectedly came the Capilupi legacy which tripled their income, and after the war came a rise in the land values which tripled the value of the legacy all over again. Some property was sold at fantastic prices, the employees were increased, two new offices were created: a Superintendent of the Poor, and a Sub-economist of the Poor; but prime materials were always lacking; there were no poor to superintend; and still the income grew! What could they do with it?

The Canonico thought and thought again, till inspiration



gave him the idea of a Hospital for Chronic Invalids, and twelve months later the hospital was built. It has been opened now for three years, and everything is ready: surgical instruments, six-atmosphere oxygen cylinders in nickel cases, and a collection of forceps which is worth a visit in itself. Everything is ready; even the staff is complete; a director, two chief and four minor assistants; three priests, who are always on the spot to give injections; even leeches have been thought of—Don Ciccio, the barber has been engaged to keep a dozen of them in case of emergency. Everything is ready. Everything but the invalid . . .

“Leave that to me”—said Gaudenzio Battisterio—“I’ll find you an invalid.” And he put himself to it seriously. They first tried it on Feliciello. Feliciello is the porter who collected, and still collects the horse droppings on the *Strada Nuova*. Feliciello was 76 years old; he slept among the rubbish heaps, and breathed, day and night, an air infected with horse-manure. His torn, half naked body was exposed to the icy winds of winter, roasted by the summer sun. Half-starved and usually drunk, outcast, and always poor, Feliciello might have been made on purpose for the hospital. The Canon convinced him. On his admission they gave him a hot bath and he immediately took cold. At first nobody paid any attention: he sneezed, that was all. They put him in a well ventilated corner exposed to the south and warmed by central heating. Temperature 65, as the regulations prescribed; chicken broth; every other possible refinement of an invalid kitchen; two nurses, and any number of wool vests—all the wool vests remaining in the Red Cross stores. At night they put on an electric heater as well.

It may have been that electric heater, or perhaps, the creosote cure (for they put him on to a creosote cure for the lungs, with hypophosphates of calcium and soda, as a tonic for his system) but, anyhow, by the seventh day Feliciello had developed diffused pleurisy and if they hadn’t discharged him at once he would doubtless have ended with double pneumonia.

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They discharged him, and he returned to the street. He is now in good health and continues to collect horse manure in the wind, frost and sun. He manages to drink two bottles of wine a day—white and red—and generally has a few coppers left to buy himself a plate of hot food. But he is all right, in spite of his 76 years, and nothing will induce him to go back to the Capilupi Hospital.

Almost the same thing happened with Costanzella: after two days in the hospital she took lumbago, and three weeks afterwards she had articular rheumatism. She left and was cured. And it was just the same with a contadino from the Piccola Marina who, up to 83 years had never been ill; and with the old woman of Matromania who had an iron constitution. Both were unable to resist a week at the hospital. But fortunately they all came out in time.

After these failures the Capri people would not rise to the bait any more but there was a foreigner, van Borig, who volunteered of his own accord. The regulations were clear: "a Hospital for Indigent Islanders." Van Borig was certainly indigent—he lived on a wretched pension from the Dutch Government—and by sheer good luck it was found that he also was an islander: he had been born in Java. For want of anything better, arrangements were made with Van Borig. All that he needed was food and lodging: his small pension sufficed for his tobacco and wine. There remained however the language difficulty: Van Borig had an atrocious Javanese accent, so they put him in the mental ward and made him pass as an idiot until seven o'clock in the evening. After that he was free. Unfortunately he ended by abusing that liberty; every night as soon as he had finished being a Chronic Mental Invalid, he went out and got drunk, which made him come back late next morning. They had to dismiss him.

With Fallatutto the calamity was more serious: he did not manage to escape in time. He died.

It is a great pity that Fallatutto is dead. Of humble origin he became, while still young, the Pitiful Beggar of Capri, and during his last years he was the Picturesque Beggar of Punta



Tragara. He was a self-made beggar. He was started by a group of artists in opposition to old Spadaro: they designed his costume—torn trousers of blue wool, a red sash, a terracotta Basque beret and a naturally patched shirt—they painted him on canvas, and on panels and even on tambourines. In one single season—during the German invasion—they sold as many as eighty Fallatutto tambourines. His beat was from Punta Tragara to the Quisisana, our *hôtel de luxe*. And he made a fortune out of it. Besides owning building land he had an account at the Banca Sorrentina and subscribed heavily to the First National Loan, when the Consolidated 5% cost 87.50. There was no charity that could not count on his support; he is known to have assisted a noble family in straitened circumstances, and to have given alms on a large scale in secret. Unfortunately the Canon got round him and induced him to play the Chronic Invalid at the Capilupi Hospital. As soon as they had disinfected him he began to feel a certain uneasiness. Two days later he started sneezing. They said that perhaps it might be the insect powder; but on the fifth day there was considerable œdema of the left lung. They buried him by night, but the fact became known all the same.



The Fallatutto tragedy almost provoked a scandal. The opposition party got hold of the case and forced the Majority to call an emergency meeting. The Mayor explained that the situation was grave, that their opponents were undermining his position . . . There were rumours of a conspiracy . . . The opposition threatened to found a new hospital. They said: "Is this your Hospital for Chronic Invalids? Where is your chronic invalid? Everybody has escaped from your hospital except Fallatutto, and Fallatutto has died! Now we will show you how to run a hospital" That was the danger: unless they could manage to find another invalid they ran the risk of seeing another hospital arise.

In their alarm they had forgotten the Canon. Nobody could discourage him. One day he arrived at the Town Hall, gathered

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his friends together in the Mayor's office and said "Eureka!"

When Don Gaudenzio mentioned the name of old Spadaro the Mayor and the Councillors were incredulous: but as soon as they saw that the Canonico was serious, they began to think. How could they induce Spadaro to leave the Piazza on which he followed his profession of Picturesque Old Fisherman? . . . The Canonico had thought of everything and had already settled the conditions. There was a fixed arrangement by which the Capilupi hospital provided its chronic invalid with board and lodging and the foreigners' tips. And wine?

That was the only difficulty.

Spadaro suffers from heartburn, and cannot drink Capri wine.

They have placed on the market a new brand of wine, which bears a label with the portrait of old Spadaro; he recommends it to all the foreigners, but does not drink it himself because, like most Capri wine it tastes of dilute sulphuric acid. What Spadaro likes is real Capri wine, the sort that comes from Ischia. Spadaro had no idea that the hospital did not provide its patients with wine. The Canonico had to explain it to him, patiently; he explained that the rule about wine could not possibly be broken. He had made the rule himself. The hospital prescribes a generous allowance of milk; on Thursdays and Sundays, sweets; on all fête days, pasta and beans. The ordinary menu includes unlimited broth, (chicken broth) cheese and fruit, coffee in the morning (or tea for the women, provided that the doctor prescribes it) and coffee again after lunch. But no wine. The rule was explicit: an absolute milk diet.

The Canonico could not give in about the wine; as Chairman he had to respect his own regulations. It looked as if relations would be broken off . . .

But relations were not broken off. Somehow or other they had to get an invalid, and the Canonico got him. Old Spadaro, who insisted on having wine at all costs, was forced to respect the rule. The Canon refused to let the Hospital give it to him. He gave it to him himself, and paid for it out of his own



pocket because he knew that the Chairman would refund it. What did that matter? He had found his invalid.

When it became known that old Spadaro had become a chronic invalid, there was a moment of panic. The Kodak Company, which had obtained exclusive rights of photographing him for their cameras, wanted to bring an action for damages against the Committee; the Steamer Company threatened to suspend the eleven o'clock steamer which brings American tourists to Capri to photograph Spadaro.

But Canon Battisterio had thought of everything: he arranged the timetable so cleverly that it is only after the departure of the steamer that old Spadaro becomes a Chronic Invalid.





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ON arriving at Capri, whither his reputation had preceded him, Professor Otto Schlamp was not a little surprised to find the study of the cult of the goddess Cybele in full activity. Our greatest archaeologists at that time were agreed that it had been introduced into the island two centuries before the Roman occupation and revived by Augustus. But till Schlamp's arrival the existence of a temple dedicated to her had been merely a matter of conjecture, a subject for the speculation of the learned. Schlamp, Professor of Religious Archæology at the University of Stuttgart, was a specialist. He had taken part in the expedition which explored without result the buried cities of Phrygia, Lydia and Mysia—an expedition organised and financed by the German Imperial Archaeological Institute to search in Asia Minor for traces of the Anatolian religion. Later on he had been director of the unsuccessful excavations undertaken in Crete around the presumed site of the temple of Rhea Cybele. But the failure of these first efforts had not discouraged him. In London, while visiting the British Museum he had stopped by mere chance before that altar (or candelabrum) which is one of the finest pieces in the Hamilton Collection and figures in the official catalogue of the museum as No. 2487. Absent-mindedly he had read in the catalogue: "*No. 2487.—Altar (or base of candelabrum.*")

An altar?

Professor Schlamp was famous for the method of Systematic Intuition in which he had adapted, for archaeological



uses, Mommsen's historical method of inductive research, and the mere mention of an altar in that dry museum catalogue fired his imagination. He cast his eyes upon the marble and began to examine it. Hamilton's altar is also famous. It was discovered at Capri during the excavations undertaken in the vineyard of Catenaccio towards the middle of the eighteenth century, and offered by Sir William Hamilton to the British Museum in 1772. It has been minutely described in all the guide-books, of which the more recent, it may be added, since Professor Schlamp's discovery, call it the Altar of Cybele. But when Otto Schlamp beheld it for the first time at the British Museum, it was known simply as the altar (or candelabrum) of Hamilton.

Schlamp examined it with growing interest. The four sphinxes on which it rests had at once roused his curiosity, but the subsequent examination of the bas-reliefs on the four slightly concave sides, threw him into a positive frenzy of excitement. These bas-reliefs represented sacrificial scenes. In front was Apollo, leaning on his lyre in the attitude of one waiting for something; in a like attitude on one side was carved a priest making ready to sacrifice a ram; then fondling a fawn, came Diana Lucifera, also waiting; and on the remaining side, also waiting, appeared the goat Aegipan. Apollo, the priest, Diana Lucifera and the goat Aegipan, all waiting! But what were they waiting for there, in the British Museum?

They were waiting for Professor Schlamp. They had been waiting for him two thousand years and more, and at the sight of them Schlamp recognised all the symbols of the cult of Cybele. He brooded for some days over his discovery, and applying his method of Systematic Intuition and Induction reached a simple and incontrovertible conclusion. Where an altar has been found there must have been a temple. *Ergo* the temple of Cybele must have been at Capri. And so to Capri Schlamp came.

At Capri, as you are aware, Schlamp found to his great surprise, that the cult of the goddess Cybele was already the

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subject of enthusiastic study and research. Kellogg, an American archaeologist, had found, or said he had found, many years before, among the ruins of the Villa of Augustus a toe from the right foot of a statue of the goddess and had sold it to the Metropolitan Museum. Norge, the Babylonian mon-archologist, who was making a collection of the remains of the principal European dynasties, showed to his intimate friends the fragment of a meteorite, assuring them that it was the symbol of Cybele brought to Capri in pre-Roman times when the Anatolian cult, which came to us from the East, first found a home in our mountain grottos. Bentley Bunn, the historian, had found an unknown and possibly, indeed certainly, spurious passage in Apollodorus in which there was even a description of a temple which he believed himself able to attribute to the cult of Cybele "*. . . the temple faces south, in a wide semi-circular curve with a double row of Corinthian columns of incomparable elegance.*" Bentley Bunn had ventured to put forward the hypothesis, unsupported by any archaeological discovery, that the temple of Cybele arose in antiquity on the esplanade of the Palazzo a Mare

I have already said that when Schlamp came to Capri, his reputation had preceded him. His fruitless researches in Asia Minor and the unsuccessful excavations in Crete had given him a world-wide renown. But although he was received at first with all the deference and sympathy that his mere name aroused, he very soon succeeded by his offhand manners and the air of superiority he assumed, in alienating the most competent antiquarians of the island. He began by throwing doubt upon the authenticity of Norge's Cybelean meteorite; he attributed to a faun the toe of the statue that Kellogg had sold in America; and he denied all authority to the historic source from which Bentley Bunn had derived the passage in Apollodorus.

When, moreover, he prepared to begin excavations and new researches on his own account, he came up against the susceptibilities of the local authorities. Schlamp had come to Capri to discover the temple of Cybele, and with that some-



what offhand frankness which is the peculiarity of all German archaeologists, he immediately made known his intentions to the Mayor, Costanziello Veruotto.

The Mayor showed himself reserved and hesitating. "Cybele?" he said, "I fancy the Council must already have passed a resolution, approved by the sub-prefect, on the question of Cybele. In any case I must have a word with the Secretary about it, for he's the man who has charge of the Cybele business."

Schlamp was shocked to find the Mayor cold and almost hostile. He had counted on the support of the municipal authorities, but he knew nothing of the secrets of municipal archaeology. He was not aware that shortly before his arrival the great problems of antiquarian science which had so far found no solution in the researches of the historians, had been officially solved by the Town Council, with reference to purely party considerations.

A number of people had made fortunes out of Roman antiquities. The Salto di Tiberio by itself with the Faro and other horrors managed by the Bella Carmelina brought in more than twenty thousand liras per annum. No one at first had taken any notice of Mithras; but after the propaganda set on foot by the Curator of Natural Beauties who had rediscovered the "Way to the South" and wanted to revive the Cult of the Sun, his grotto had been thronged by thousands of tourists. No sooner had the question of Cybele been raised in the Council, no sooner was it known that her temple ought to have stood at the Palazzo a Mare, than a councillor of the minority who already ran the Baths of Tiberius applied for the concession of the temple of Cybele, proposing to erect on its ruins a Swiss *Châlet* and serve refreshment to bathers.

Immediately the bosom of the administration was rent by one of the most acrimonious archaeological disputes in the records of the island. Canon Battisterio, the adviser of the Majority, grasped the opportunity of doing a good turn to his friends, and favoured the assignment of the cult of Cybele to the district of Matromania, which was the stronghold of his own

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party. One of the aldermen had already secured a monopoly of the Grotto of Mithras, with the right of selling beer and mineral waters in it, and was pulling wires to get the site of the presumed temple of Cybele transferred to another grotto adjoining it, in which he might serve afternoon tea. But this time his scheme was fated to fare ill. The infuriated Minority cried aloud at the scandal. The concession of the cult of Cybele should not be made in this hole-and-corner fashion; there must be a formal resolution by the Council. Canon Battisterio stood to his guns. "The Minority," said he, "want to fight us on the cult of Cybele, do they? Very well, we accept their challenge."

When the question was brought forward in the Council, the job had been so cleverly managed that the councillors of the Minority found themselves all at sea. On the agenda they read: "Assignment of the cult of Cybele to a suitable locality on the island. Signor Rondelli's Report."

Now although Mr. Secretary Rondelli had only recently arrived here from Piacenza he had grasped the situation at once. Under Canon Battisterio's guidance he had also realised that if he wished to keep afloat, he could not go against the stream; and when instructed to draw up a report to the Council on the goddess Cybele he had composed a masterpiece. He had arrived at the conclusion that, through want of adequate evidence for its separate existence, the cult of Cybele should be assimilated to that of Mithras. The cave of Mithras was situate in the district named Matromania; and when one came to examine the derivation of this place-name

Indeed there was no getting over the place-name. Rondelli, who was a man of learning, had explained everything so clearly. "Matromania" was, of course, from *Mater Magna*, the Great Mother, in other words, Cybele. The Mayor, as he read Rondelli's report grew hot and incoherent at every difficult word, thumping the table with his fists and crying: "The place-name is clear evidence! If no gen'leman has any remarks to offer, we vote unanimous for the place-name."

"And if," the Mayor went on reading the report: "any doubt



should remain in the minds of the Council, is there not the evidence of Velleius Paterculus, of Silius Italicus, of Pliny the Younger, of Apollodorus . . . that the Great Mother is the Phrygian Cybele, who was introduced into the island from Asia Minor at approximately the same time as the god Mithras? You must rise, gentleman, above all party considerations. You must carry your minds untainted by low personal interests into the clear aether of the origin of our cults. You must go back to prehistoric times and scan the sea of antiquity. Do you not see a ship coming into view——?”

The Mayor as he read the report was getting excited by the Secretary's vivid description of that Argo which brought to us from the East the meteoritic image of the goddess Cybele. Pointing with his finger towards the cupboard in which the municipal archives were kept, whence it seemed to him that the ship should emerge, he cried:

“What do you see on this ship?”

The Councillors turned hurriedly towards the cupboard and saw nothing, and the Mayor, to enlighten them, went on:

“Do you not see the goddess coming to us from the East? Do you not see the symbol of the goddess, a meteoritic——”

“Meteoritic,” corrected the Secretary.

“A meteoritic stone, symbol of Cybele, which the ship brings as a sacred relic of the new divinity who is drawing nigh to the island amid the roar of tympanums—you remember that she is *Cybele Tympanoterpēs*? And where would you that the islanders should deposit the symbol which approached them with the tumultuous noise that accompanied (and to this day accompanies) every religious celebration, if not to the temple of Mithras, celebrated for the thunder of the taurobolium with which the island re-echoed in ancient times?”

The argument was convincing and the Councillors of the Majority on hearing that Velleius Paterculus, Silius Italicus, Pliny the Younger and Apollodorus had been unanimous, were themselves no less unanimous in their vote.

The assimilation of the two cults, of Mithras and of

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Cybele having been passed by the unanimous Majority, it was decided to construct in the Grotto of Matromania the ruins of a dividing wall which would have separated (for administrative purposes) the two cults, and the management of both was knocked down at public auction to the Alderman who provides teas there to this day . . .

Now Professor Otto Schlamp knew nothing of these municipal secrets, and as soon as he reached Capri, he took steps to discover the temple of Cybele. The Mayor refused the concession for the new excavations, and as Schlamp persisted, he wound up by refusing to admit the existence of the temple, and finally the existence of Cybele herself.

"And what then," Schlamp protested, "about Hamilton's altar in the British Museum?"

"Here," replied Veruotto, "we are in Italy," and he cut the conversation short. For though the Mayor was the most pliable of men, he knew how to show decision when the interests of the municipality were affected. If Schlamp insisted on discovering the temple, let him go to London; at Capri we discover our antiquities for ourselves.

Faced with the firm and dignified attitude of the Mayor the German archaeologist grasped the fact that with regard to the major problems of archaeology there was little to be done at Capri, and merely not to waste his time he began to busy himself with minor ones.

To begin with he tackled the affair of the tray of cameo glass that had been found in the Grotto dell' Arsenale and sold by a fisherman to an English visitor for two lire, and which, bought subsequently by an American for two hundred lire, was sold later to the Metropolitan Museum for ten thousand dollars.

Just reckon it up: ten thousand dollars at the exchange of to-day . . .

Schlamp, however, when he came to Capri, could not foresee what the exchange would be to-day; but even at the exchange of those days, which was 6.25, the tray would have worked out at 62,500 lire, and as it is easy to imagine, a tray of



that price could not have belonged to a freedman or a praetorian or even to a simple patrician.

The famous tray was one of the archaeological mysteries of Capri, and Schlamp, who was determined to clear it up, applied to it in turn his method of Rational Induction. He began by asking himself to whom a tray of that price could have belonged. He proceeded by the method of elimination. Was it Tiberius? No, certainly not Tiberius, who was notoriously a miser. Was it then a Roman patrician, someone in the suite of Tiberius—Cocceius Nerva, Cornelius Lentulus, Laco, Masgaba or Charicles or Thrasyllus? It did not seem likely. The tray must have formed part of the imperial dinner service or that of a wealthy gourmand. A wealthy gourmand? Then—what about Vedius Pollio?

It needed a Schlamp to think of Vedius Pollio; for the rest it was enough to examine the tray. Its decoration offered a piece of evidence that had escaped everybody's notice. The subject is a group of fish; you can distinctly see two *murenae*, a red gurnard with high lights of golden murrine, obtained by strontium oxide, a cuttlefish with tentacles in relief, and some small fry. This was enough, and more than enough, to enable Schlamp to complete his archaeological investigation: it was a perfect fish-stew *alla marinara*. That simple fact was enough to call up the figure of the wealthiest patrician of the imperial train, Vedius Pollio, the inventor of fish-stew *alla marinara*, the gourmet who was the rival of Lucullus. Who does not remember the pomp of those banquets in which the two villas competed with one another, the one on Cape Misenum, magnificent with marble statues, the other, that of Pollio, famous for its plate, which at the time of Augustus was valued at two hundred thousand gold sesterces? The collection of murrine vases alone was worth eighty thousand denarii; and the specimens of iridescent glass in the form of cups, pyxes and wine jars were of a splendour which eclipsed that of the Emperor's own collection. Schlamp, recalled that incident at Pollio's villa—related by Seneca—which aroused the wrath of Augustus. The slave whose duty it was to pour out a cup of

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Faustina for the Emperor, broke the fragile neck of the amphora in unsealing it, and Pollio had the slave thrown alive into the tank of the famous *murenae*. The cruelty of this act roused the Emperor to such indignation that he began to dash upon the ground all the cups within reach of his hand, and was only appeased when his magnificent host begged him to accept a tray, the work of a consummate Greek master . . . Such at any rate is Seneca's story.

What, thought Schlamp, if that were the tray of cameo glass discovered at Capri!

That is precisely what it was, and the tray from the Grotto dell' Arsenale, preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of New York is now called "The Tray of Vedius Pollio."

Schlamp, who had come to Capri for the temple of Cybele, amused himself thus for two or three years with the minor problems of archaeology still unsolved. After the identification of Vedius Pollio's tray he discovered the Phœnician origin of the staircase cut in the live rock which had hitherto been held to be the work of the Lestrygonians. He found in the lower staircase of the Passetiello a pointed iron tool which enabled him to carry back the origin of that road connecting Capri and Anacapri, to the Teleboae.

He wrote also a learned monograph on *Brick-stamps and Stamped Tiles*, in which he made a list of all the trade-marks of the bricks and tiles used in the construction of the Caesarean buildings. He derived the name of "Tragara" from the Greek *triarka* with a wealth of erudition which completely demolished the teaching of Hoare, who had derived it from *Tre-are*. He took the dimensions of the tomb of Masgaba on the Monacone and he made an analysis of the hydraulic cement employed by the Romans in the baths of the Grotta Bianca.

In the three years of his stay at Capri Otto Schlamp tackled and maybe solved, every obscure problem of current archaeology except that which had been the object of his visit. He had come to Capri to discover the temple of Cybele and had found the cult of the Anatolian goddess located by the Town Council in a grotto undoubtedly spurious. The real temple,



which it had been the ambition of all the archaeologists to discover, remained shrouded in mystery. At Capri, where it would have been so easy to discover it—for with a little good will you can discover anything in Capri—everyone seemed to have conspired against him. He decided to leave and go elsewhere—to Baiae, to Cumae, to Paestum. He would finally have reached Sicily and Magna Graecia, and would certainly have discovered it somewhere else.

Instead of which . . .

Instead of which he discovered it after all at Capri! But by mere chance, when he was least thinking of it. The discovery of the temple of Cybele, which has been fully described and illustrated in the Bulletin of the Imperial Archaeological Institute, came about as Schlamp himself tells, by pure accident; but the way it came about detracts in no wise from the merits of the discoverer, who does not confine himself to revealing to the studious world in its most minute details the imposing structure of the edifice with a ground-plan, two elevations, front and side, and two sections, transverse and longitudinal, but in illustration of the discovery reconstructs the whole history of the cult of the Great Mother; recapitulates the fruitless researches already made by himself in Phrygia, Lydia and Mysia, the vain explorations of the spot in Crete where the altar of Rhea Cybele is presumed to have stood; and tells in detail the story of the discovery made by mere chance at Capri.

In plain language, in a businesslike and almost colloquial style through every line of which the inductive method is visible, Otto Schlamp tells the story of his discovery. He was no longer thinking of Cybele; he had decided to leave the island but before doing so he wanted to go up just once more to Anacapri. On arriving at the belvedere from which the majestic panorama of the Bay is to be seen, he had stopped his carriage and dismounted to enjoy for the last time that view which recalls all the historic memories of Campania Felix and Roma Immortalis. Facing him was Parthenope yielding to the voluptuous embrace of the sea of Ulysses;



further north Teanum, the "unconquered," and Capua; the mountains of Samnium and of the land of the Sabines. Schlamp admits that he experienced once more the emotion which that panorama so steeped in memories never failed to produce in him—the stage on which the drama of Rome's dominion had been unrolled with its record of the peoples subjected to her laws and her religion—that Olympus of all the gods brought thither from Greece and from further still: Mithras, perhaps Cybele . . . certainly Cybele, and Schlamp's thoughts returned to her. Perhaps it was the shadow of the goddess which crossed his brain; for, after travelling afar, his eyes returned to the nearer view and fixed themselves on a point of the great terrace of the Palazzo a Mare which lies beneath the belvedere on the Anacapri road.

"By-the-bye," said Schlamp to his driver, "by-the-bye, what's that green spot down there at the Palazzo a Mare?"

"That has always been there," said the driver, "it is ancient."

Ancient? Schlamp attached perhaps too much importance to the word. The driver wanted to be agreeable; he did not even know what spot Professor Schlamp was talking about; but he did know that foreigners are always pleased to hear that any and everything at Capri is "ancient." The natives always reply to strangers' questions accordingly. "Who is Spadaro?" "An ancient fisherman." "And the Faraglioni?" "Most ancient, they remember Tiberius." This air is saturated with antiquity; the landscape is classic.

But that spot, ancient or not ancient, was certainly curious: a semi-circular space, all green with fresh grass, a little oasis of verdure in the middle of the bare and barren terrace which lies encircled by the luxuriant vineyards and olive-groves in the valley where, at the time of Augustus, stood a little Greek city magnificently adorned with famous buildings—the Circus Caprensis, the Hippodrome and the Ephebeum. The great terrace of the Palazzo a Mare lies desolate to-day, white with the crumbling plaster and rubbish to which the indolence of man and the malice of time have reduced the remains of



what must once have been the proudest of Augustus' palaces, and right in the middle of it is to be seen to this day that well defined spot, the grassy patch in the shape of a semicircle.

"Ancient!" Schlamp pondered for some moments; then he stood transfixed, unthinking. The revelation which came to him suddenly, must have dazzled him with a vivid, fierce light, illuminating at length the path of his laborious research, showing him, there, a few hundred yards away, the longed-for goal. Phrygia, Lydia, Mysia—how far away they were! The dead cities of Anatolia . . . And Crete! How long a road had he travelled, laboriously, fruitlessly, to see at last, in Capri, the lifting of the veil that had shrouded in so deep a mystery the cult of the goddess Cybele.

In the introduction to his work *The Temple of Cybele*, (first edition) where Professor Otto Schlamp tells of his discovery, he says that when, from the height of the belvedere, on the Anacapri road he saw that semi-circular patch and the driver had assured him it was ancient, he achieved in a flash, instantaneously but completely, the whole vision of the temple. In spite of this he did not want to let himself be carried away by his imagination. He remained perfectly calm; he looked more carefully; he was certain. So certain that, not to arouse suspicions, he was able even to resist the temptation of betaking himself at once to the spot and verifying his discovery. But already he felt verification was superfluous.

"The discovery of the temple of Cybele," he writes, "was already *potentially* made before I came to Capri; at Capri all I had to do was to fix the site." In this somewhat ingenuous confession we find the triumph of his method of Rational Induction in all its simplicity. If he had a doubt, it must only have occurred to his mind afterwards, after he had made the ideal reconstruction of the temple. It was only then that he noticed an omission: he had overlooked the connection that existed, or ought to have existed, between the grass on the semi-circular patch and the site of the temple.

The semi-circular shape agreed with the description of the temple in Apollodorus, and the discovery of Hamilton's altar

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a century and a half before at the Palazzo a Mare left no doubt as to the site. But the grass? Why, within the circuit of the temple was the grass growing fresh and green?

The second introductory note, written after the ideal reconstruction of the temple of Cybele and entitled *The Archaeological Value of Organic Manures*, is even to this day considered the most original contribution of the chemistry of fertilizers to archaeological research.

When he had quite finished his reconstruction, Schlamp was obliged to make a few investigations on the site. He went there by night and took two specimens of soil from within the patch of grass and three from outside of it. The results of the analyses of the soil are given by him in a tabular form. The presence of very rich phosphates, and particularly of nitrates of ammonia, left no doubt on the correctness of Schlamp's hypothesis that the semi-circular patch had been manured at an epoch not clearly determined with organic products or perhaps carbonised remains. But of what sort?

Schlamp thought he could conclude that they must be the remains of animals sacrificed in honour of the goddess. According to the Anatolian ritual what was left of the victims, their blood and entrails and also the ashes of the internal organs burned on the sacrificial altar, had to be scattered on the ground in the temple enclosure by the hands of the *rex sacrificulus* himself to appease the gods of the Underworld after the *haruspices* had interpreted the will of Cybele from the examination of the entrails of the sacrificed animals. The ritual of the Anatolian goddess therefore explained the rich fertilisation of the ground, and the fertilisation explained the luxuriant growth of the grass. It was a pretty archaeological problem. Given the passage (even though spurious) in a classical writer—Apollodorus—and a sacrificial ritual resulting in the fertilisation of an enclosure corresponding to the description of that classical writer, find the temple that stood on that enclosure.

For the solution of the problem Schlamp had simply applied the Schlampian method.



At that time the strangest rumours were circulating about Schlamp's sudden retirement from all society. He was no more to be seen in the Piazza; he was no more to be found at the International Club. There were malicious tongues that murmured "whisky," but instead of drinking, Schlamp was working. The discovery once made, he did not breathe a word of it to anyone, but shut himself up in his lonely lodging, surrounded by his books, and for three months remained invisible. Only three months! If one thinks of the mass of historical materials, the wealth of statistics, the profusion of documents with which his monograph on *The Temple of Cybele* overflows, it is almost incredible that such a task could have been brought to a conclusion in the last three months of his stay at Capri. The introduction alone is an exhaustive treatise on the primitive religions that flourished on the island or were introduced there, and reviews successively the Priapain cult of the Lestrygonian, the sexual orgies of the Teleboae, the liturgic ritual of the Phœnician and the sun worship of the Greeks and Romans. The appearance of a ship which, about 187 B.C., arrived from Anatolia with an image of the goddess Cybele, is described so vividly that in reading it we feel once more the breath of the soft scirocco breeze that wafted it to Capri. His work is now classic, and in it his method remains as an unsurpassed model of archaeological research.

It need only be said that the entire reconstruction of the temple of Cybele is based on the observation of that semi-circular patch of grass, which is to be seen even to this day at the Palazzo a Mare. From this Schlamp succeeded in reconstructing the entire temple and even in reproducing the decorative frieze in Pentelic marble, all in festoons of flowers recalling the festoons mingled with ears of corn that occur on the base of Timotheus' statue of Diana which stood in the shrine of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine. Indeed this comparison between the Temple of Cybele at Capri and the three shrines which Augustus caused to be erected at Rome to commemorate the oracle of Apollo, furnished the German archaeologist with the proof, if any had been needed, that it

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must have been Augustus himself who built the magnificent temple at Capri to celebrate on the island a worship which was the supplement of that of Apollo. The statue of the goddess which perhaps stood at the end of the temple but of which no trace had ever been found, was attributed by Schlamp to the chisel of Cephissodorus.

Of Schlamp himself nothing has since been heard and there is hardly anyone at Capri now who remembers him. He left as suddenly as he had come, and some time after his departure there came from Germany merely the news of the discovery of the Temple of Cybele. Of himself the remembrance is lost, but of his works there remains what is perhaps the most notable monument in our neighbourhood.

Visitors whom the beauty of the island and the fame of its antiquities still draw to Capri, when they gaze from the belvedere on the Anacapri road and admire the marvellous view of the Bay, are always struck by the green semi-circular patch in the middle of the rough, bare esplanade of the Palazzo a Mare, and when they ask what it is, they get the reply: "The Temple of Cybele." But all our visitors do not know who Cybele was, and some, their curiosity aroused, ask the further question: "Who was Cybele?"

"Catenaccio's cow," is the reply.

Catenaccio is still alive. He is an old peasant who cultivates the vineyard behind the terrace of the Palazzo a Mare. But his cow is dead. It died before Schlamp came to Capri, and after his departure it became famous. For there came an Inspector General of Antiquities, sent from the Ministry, at the head of an archæological commission which was to have taken over the Temple of Cybele—prematurely declared to be a national monument—and Catenaccio complained that the Commission were trampling down the grass. He maintained that the grass was his: he had grown it on that bare and dry terrace, for the purpose of pasturing there a cow tied by a rope which was fastened to a large stone.

In this way the cow had manured the semi-circular patch.

On a question from the Commission, Catenaccio declared



that the rope might have been about a dozen metres long, and in point of fact the diameter of the Temple, as drawn by Schlamp, is seventy two feet six inches—about 24 metres, just twice the cow's radius of action. The Inspector ventured the opinion that the block of stone to which the cow had been tied, might have been the plinth of the altar of Cybele preserved in the British Museum, and Catenaccio raised no objection because the stone was that of an old oil-mill which he had thrown aside when he had installed an apparatus for extracting the oil by modern machinery. Of the Temple of Cybele no other trace has been found. It may have stood in Phrygia, or in Mysia, or in Asia Minor, or perhaps in Crete. But why not at Capri?





“CERTOSINA”: A DIGESTIVE LIQUEUR



THE fame of Augusto Lovatti is inextricably bound up with that of the Certosina, a medicinal digestive liqueur, extracted and distilled from all the aromatic plants of the island of Capri. But the fame of the Certosina has ended by impairing that of Lovatti and making us forget that he was the founder of a school of landscape painting which gave birth and prosperity to an entire generation of painters.

Lovatti was not only founder of a school; he was the inventor of our landscape, the creator of those subjects and local types upon which Capri has gradually and picturesquely been modelling itself, and which have given to the island its peculiar character—a character recognizable on all the canvasses, palettes, tambourines, and boxes of inlaid wood that are on view in studios, shops and fairs all over the world.

Let it be clearly understood, however, that Lovatti created only the original models of the Capri landscape; the wholesale manufactory came later on, and of this industry, as of that of the Certosina liqueur, he did not live to reap the harvest.

To him are due the Faraglioni rocks, or at least the Faraglioni in their actual number and position, infused with that golden light and those purple shadows which may be seen to-day, below Tragara. The discovery of the Faraglioni has been attributed, on the adjoining continent, to Robert, a Swiss marine painter of last century. But on his canvas, painted at Capri, you perceive only a single rock, meagre, melancholy, all in the shade. The picture is not bad for its period, but just compare it with Lovatti's Faraglioni!



His Faraglioni are three in number—I know that they look like two, but there are really three of them: the outside one all flooded in the light of sunset, almost burning; the middle rock half illuminated, with its cavern in the shade; and the third drowned in darkness. Not in the chill darkness of Robert's picture, but in a darkness such as only Lovatti knew how to contrive; all crimson lake of the first quality and ultramarine and chrome yellow; for Lovatti cared little about the price of oil-colours. He cared little, although he was not rich. He happened to be a gentleman.

Observe, for example, his "Arch of the Sirens" (an exclusive model of his in those days); he splashed on the tints with a trowel, in order to obtain the full effect of the cliffs in relief. It is true he got well paid for his "Arch of the Sirens," but then he was the sole proprietor of this model, and the one he did for Krupp of almost natural size as seen from a distance, brought him in six thousand francs. You see that was Lovatti's own "Siren Arch"; you can buy one to-day for twenty-five francs, cabinet size, but that is not the same thing.

To him we also owe the Punta Ventroso with westerly gale, the Castiglione with sun-light effect and tarantella-dancing under vine-wreathed arbour in the foreground; the Faro of Tiberius with the Bella Carmelina's tavern (red and white wine) and the Piccola Marina with that agave in flower. These models, in their day, were Lovatti's exclusive property. Nowadays such landscapes are easy to produce and if only there were a steam saw-mill on the island they could be produced still more abundantly and cheaply. Nowadays, thanks to the competition of Russian painters, the Faraglioni may be said to be within reach of the humblest home. The panels of poplar-wood arrive from Sorrento ready sawn and smoothed, with the horizon drawn in a straight line, the sea below and a cobalt-blue sky above, so that on Capri there is nothing left to do save to fill up the designs, to add a wisp of cloud or a column here and there; the tourist has only to say which panel he wants and cannot complain of the price. In

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Lovatti's day such pictures were painted conscientiously one after the other and sold at his own prices, which, needless to say, gave cause for complaint to everybody.

He created a dozen landscape subjects and, had it not been for his activity as an industrialist, who knows how many more of them he might not have put together? Which does not mean that we should be better off with twenty or thirty "paintable" subjects. In the matter of industrial products, on the other hand, this island, according to Lovatti, might now be the rival of Germany; it might support itself by the sole production of benzine; with a duty on the export of agave-fibre the municipality might balance its budget and have something (over) for a double display of fireworks on the festival of Saint Costanzo instead of a single one, as now. And the extract of broom, the volatile oil of wormwood, the euphorbia-milk—who does not remember the *Lait de Ninon*, based on euphorbia-milk, for the complexion?—the dried leaf of the Indian fig (among the papers of Lovatti there must be his correspondence with Poiret regarding the leaf of this fig). And the Certosina liqueur?

These were all Lovatti's ideas. But he had only to start an idea and forthwith the capital took flight. This, the evaporation of the required capital, was the tragedy of his life, and the dominating note of all his industrial activity. And yet he never complained; there is not a hint of bitterness in the few papers he has left behind—the materials for his memoirs having been destroyed, possibly by himself.

The briefest glance into these now faded papers will suffice to prove that he never doubted of success; they are all in order, stitched into commonplace books and portfolios and copy-books that bear, in a beautiful rounded handwriting done with Chinese ink, titles like "Premature Ideas," "The Dynamics of Aromas," "Olfactory Analysis."

Yes, there is a large portfolio of "premature ideas," of ideas embryonic, barely formulated, ideas which the public has never known. For Lovatti, being a practical man, never brought forward an idea unless it was mature or "fermented"



as he used to say. There is a commonplace book which reminds one of Leonardo da Vinci's method of investigation; it bears the title "*Testing and Testing Again*" and, a line lower down, in brackets: "*Frangar, non flectar*"—Lovatti's motto. It is full of brief hints, fugitive notes, records of tests and experiments dealing, almost exclusively, with the flora of Capri:

"*Rosemary*—infused with three parts alcohol (Lovatti spells it *alcole* in the Roman fashion)—decant the infusion, distil it, stopper the extract hermetically. Write to Atkinson, Bond Street, make an offer in pounds sterling. Probable production, two hectolitres at liras 120,000 each equals liras 240,000. If the transaction ferments, employ the capital for pushing benzoine on to the market."

"*Cistus*—work up the *cistus* beds of Campetiello. Form a syndicate to buy the western slope of the island. Graft *cistus monspeliensis*, the most aromatic variety, upon *cistus incanus*. For perfumery and pharmaceutical purposes. Presumable return, liras 37,000."

"*Allium nigrum*; whether the scent of kitchen garlic could not be improved?"

* * * * *

There is a note, a suggestion, an idea upon all the aromatic and medicinal flora of the island; on the pollen of crocus, the milk of euphorbia, the resinous tears of the Aleppo pine, the juice of *scilla maritima*, or common squill, the lentisk ("Could one not graft—thus wrote Lovatti—the Sicilian pistachio upon our local lentiscus, and turn the whole island into a pistachio-grove?").

In "*Testing and Testing Again*" there is also a project for utilising the arbutus shrub, *arbutus unedo*: the gradual transformation of the entire forestal economy of the island, by reducing its tracts of wild brushwood into an arbutus plantation. Lovatti traces the arbutus from its origin onwards—from the earliest botanical investigations of Fabio Colonna who described it in his *Phytobasanos*, down to our day; he fixes rules

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for gathering the fruit, refers to culinary experiments—sugar and arbutus-berries, in equal weight. . . .

But the required capital for this arbutus-jam industry must also have been lacking, since nothing came of the project.

And then he determined to devote his attention to the Capri air, that air all laden with a searching flowery perfume which bewilders the senses, that air which is at once the charm and the curse of the island.

Now what is this Capri air? Lovatti must have faced the problem and endeavoured to pierce its mystery. He may have been the first to gain a clear insight into this enigma which perplexes all the rest of us; he may have glimpsed both the mechanical and the olfactory aspects of the question.

It was like the attraction of some magnetic force drawing out of their lurking-places all the odours, the essential oils, of our flora in a wild riot, an intoxicating wave, of perfume. A kinetic mass of olfactory vibrations whose resultant is a dynamic fluid (observed also by Marinetti): a complex and impalpable substance of such high power that it overcomes the resistance of every sense, troubles heart and brain and conscience . . . and is yet so delicious. Who has not experienced the effects of this Capri air?

If Lovatti had been a mere theorist, he would have been content to propound some doctrine or formulate some law, bio-chemical or electromagnetic or radio-active, relating to the air of Capri. But he was no theorist; he was a practical man—he kept saying so himself—a constructive genius. That is why he now girded his loins for his grandest achievement, an achievement which surpasses all his pictorial artistry: the industrialization of the component parts of the Capri atmosphere. Soon he overstepped even this ideal, and proposed to extract all the useful ingredients out of the earth of Capri and to flood the world's markets with their products.

He began with benzoine. At that time there happened to be a dearth of benzoine in the market; in all the Indian plantations a parasite was destroying the *Asa dulcis*, the benzoe tree that



yields an aromatic resin out of which one can distil benzoin as well.

Lovatti made experiments with the local lentiscus shrub and succeeded in obtaining a perfectly pure C_6H_6 . The motor-car industry was then barely beginning, but one could already foresee the vast developments which lay ahead. Lovatti spoke about this to Krupp, who used to come to Capri every year, and got him interested in the purchase of all the uncultivated land on the island, which was thereafter to be planted with lentiscus. Krupp promised to see the thing through.

He gave that promise to Lovatti just as everybody else used to give him promises. But the required funds were not forthcoming and the lentiscus groves remained unplanted. Nowadays benzine comes from America, from the Balkans and Caucasus; and not an ounce is produced on Capri. Yet Lovatti proved that one can obtain it from the resin of local lentiscus.

The same thing happened with his extract of Capri broom, and with his essence of thyme; with the decoction of heather-blossoms and of juniper-seeds, with the essential oil of cistus, with that marvellous preparation of rue (for medicinal purposes). . . .

There was always some hitch about the financing of these projects. Lovatti had only to start an idea, and forthwith the necessary capital evaporated. But he was never discouraged; after each failure he used to say *Frangar, non flectar!* That was his motto, but he did not even allow himself to be broken; he was neither *frangatus* nor *flectus*, neither broken nor bent.

He had, momentarily at least, exhausted the aromatic possibilities of his flora of Capri. He had experimented with all the odorous flowers, and always obtained the same result. Now he attacked the euphorbia. He felt and understood the euphorbia's milky appeal, and the only enthusiasm which possessed him as he broke off one twig after another, was to see this milky fluid coagulated into resounding dollars; or rather into pounds sterling. For Lovatti insisted upon being paid in pounds sterling; it was to be cash on delivery when he proposed this affair to Atkinson the London perfumers; he him-

self undertook to furnish the euphorbia juice which was to be treated, in London, with honey and alcohol of lavender; the cosmetic was to be put on the market under the name of *Lait de Ninon*—a trade mark registered in all the countries of the International Union for the protection of Commerce—and the label was to bear the imprint "Made in Capri." He insisted on this point, and made it an essential condition.

Atkinson's began by putting things off, and then answering evasively; their capital was heavily engaged in other directions . . . capital which, as usual, evaporated. It sufficed, however, since Lovatti had enjoyed his inspiration. . . . You think he was discouraged? By no means; he said: "*Frangar non flectar!*"

There was nothing to be discouraged about; he was already on the spot with his idea for utilising the leaves of the Indian fig. The ordinary Indian fig, *Opuntia ficus indica*, presents no remarkable feature. What you must do is to procure some leaves of the *opuntia crinifera* which is very common in the Mexican deserts, and graft them in autumn upon the ordinary variety; cut the leaves in spring, dry them in the sun, and peel off the rind without damaging its hairy covering. The process is described in the note-book on "Succulent plants." Lovatti succeeded in obtaining a hybrid which had lost all the fleshy character of the common Indian fig; broad palmate leaves of papyrus structure with a reticulated framework of very tough and elastic fibres and thick covering of bristly hairs. This time it was a question of thrusting upon the market an absolutely new fashion; a variant, so to speak, of that old use of fig-leaves which, so far as human adornment is concerned, has been restricted to the domain of statuary.

But how to utilise the dried leaves of this Capri variety of *Opuntia crinifera*? The answer will be found in the Bible; one has only to recall what Adam and Eve did when "knowing that they were naked, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons." Lovatti did more than this; he conceived an entire costume, and a large dressmaking establishment which was to rise up on Capri and impose this fashion upon



society in general; he thought of a good name for this firm: "A la feuille de figuier d'Inde." "A la feuille de figuier d'Inde" was a failure; that is, the idea failed; Lovatti wrote to Paquin and sent samples, but even in Paris nothing came of it.

Nowadays that enterprise of Indian fig leaves has been forgotten; forgotten is also the ITACA Industria Tessile Artistica Caprese (Anonima).

The ITACA was never founded because the subscribers, when asked to pay three-tenths of the capital, evaporated and with them the capital; but the notion was taken up elsewhere, in America. The fibre of the American agave, a cheap fibre nowise comparable to that of the Capri variety, is now woven and produces a cloth not inferior to that of jute.

Lovatti obtained a fibre eight metres in length, from the stalk of the flower which blossomed in 1903 at the Piccola Marina, close to the ruined entrance of the chapel of Saint Andrew. Over that *semprevivo* of the Piccola Marina Lovatti had a right of priority; he had seen that flower grow and had watched it day after day during the long months of its development: shaped first like an enormous asparagus and then, one fine day, suddenly expanded into the magnificence of its full blossoming, like a prodigious candelabra that supports on its bronze-tinted arms, symmetrically disposed, the goblets overflowing with gummy yellow pollen. He had also seen it die, and one day he found the stem thrown to earth by a furious westerly gale. Lovatti peeled off its longest fibres—one of them reached the length of eight metres—and worked upon them for a month, before making his idea public. He tested their tensile strength, established their hygrometric coefficient, fixed the limit of their elasticity and of the force required to bring about a permanent deformation, and calculated the weight that would produce a definite rupture of the material. And only then, only after having examined the problem in all its aspects, did he come forward with his idea. He mentioned it to the Grand Duke of Hesse, who had bought his picture of the Piccola Marina which contained this agave, and the Grand Duke put him into communication with Pfeiffer.

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Pfeiffer, permanent secretary to the German *Kakteengesellschaft*, came every year to Capri for the purpose of certain rejuvenating experiments carried out upon *Cephalocereus senilis* with a graft of the spherical seed of *Cereus erectus*. Pfeiffer now passes for the precursor of Voronoff and is certainly a pioneer in the great art of vegetable grafts. But he behaved like a cad with Lovatti; he invented a thousand difficulties and declared that he doubted whether the necessary acclimatisation would be rapid enough to ensure a sound commercial return on this agave-speculation. That is why the ITACA society proved to be a failure, even before it was properly constituted.

Frangar non flectar!

That was his motto, and you can read it to this day on the sealing-wax mark impressed upon the empty bottles of Certosina, Lovatti's liqueur.

He wished to fix his motto upon those bottles which are, and will remain, a worthy monument to the memory of the greatest poet-manufacturer ever born on Capri. He repeated the words so often, that he ended in destroying his poor life which had been the life of a millionaire; a millionaire in ideas. The birth of this Certosina-liqueur marked a return to his first love, his passion for the aromatic flora of the island. "Certosina" was not its real name; but only one adopted for commercial purposes, since the Certosina, a medicinal, digestive Capri liqueur really possessed no name at all; it had, or should have had, only a number; nor was it an ordinary liqueur, but an appetiser, an *apéritif*. Or at all events it ought to have been an *apéritif*, the famous Capri *apéritif* composed of all the perfumes and aromatic essences of the native flora—it ought to have represented Capri air in liquid form. All his attempts at utilising separate plants had failed, but surely this final and greatest experiment, the sun of all his efforts, to blend into one harmonious creation all the floral odours of Capri, ought to have succeeded? How many native industries are now prospering that required barely the hundredth part of the inventive genius which Lovatti expended upon its Certosina! Take for



instance, the extractive industry of the Blue Grotto, and note how much money its inventors are coining at this moment out of that old cave; the foreigners' entrance-fee, the sale of its coral and even of its water in bottles!

And to think that boatmen are complaining because the Municipality has fixed a duty on the exportation of the Blue Grotto Water! Not that the water is of bad quality; the thing is also well got up; the bottles are of good glass, and the sterilized corks have proved to be an attractive keepsake for tourists. The boatmen give it a blue tint, just a faint bluish shade, like that used by laundresses, as a preservative; but the cost of production does not exceed half a franc and it is sold at three francs inclusive of duty.

The Certosina, on the other hand, never reached the point of being manufactured at all, and everybody goes on drinking Chartreuse and Grand Marnier as if Lovatti had never existed.

He is now dead, poor Lovatti. But his Certosina will never die. The flasks speak of him to this day, with their attractive coloured labels, one in front and one behind. On the front one is engraved, in noble thirteenth century lettering, the name:

Certosina
Liquore stomatico digestivo.

There are two pious untruths, however, on that label; the name itself and its attribute of *digestivo*.

It was during the last year of his experiments that Lovatti admitted us, a few intimate friends, into his laboratory, where the ingredients of the *apéritif* which he was creating had been already decided upon; he was still making tests with wormwood—that is, absinthe—but it was only a question of the quantity to be employed. The wormwood harvest had been abundant that year, and had cost him nothing; it is one of those plants which are eradicated on Capri when the country lanes are being cleaned up, because under the mayoralty of Veruotto, it used to be considered “harmful.” Lovatti, after distilling his

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infusion of wormwood, had thereby acquired a pretty liquid of opalescent green and, having just read Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, was thinking of increasing its strength and calling it "The Green Siren."

Then he returned to his earlier project; the liqueur should have no name whatever, but only a number, the number of the final test from among all his experiments in flavour.

In the last year of these experiments he admitted only a few intimates to his laboratory, and I remember how we were gathered together, late one evening, in the little den at the back of his studio. A small bracket nailed into the wall held all the different samples with their numbers; there must have been about six hundred of them.

Every celebrity that passed through Capri used to come to Lovatti's studio; men like Behring, and the surgeon Israel, and Schweninger, (Krupp's doctor) who was always squatting behind the alembic. One evening there also arrived von Knapp, the mysterious von Knapp about whom nobody knew anything. That was on one of the last evenings; Lovatti made us taste his latest blends: the 601—it contained too much cinnamon, that blend—the 602 which was still in process of decantation, the 603, 604, 605 . . . Lovatti had decided in favour of 605; he even showed us his sketch for a label:

"605" *Apéritif aromatique de Capri*.

It was Schweninger, I fancy, who took objection to its tint; the 605 was greenish, midway between the colour of the rue and that of the mallows, and Schweninger suggested that it should be coloured with cochineal. Lovatti told him he had already thought of this; he always thought of everything!

He produced a flask and showed it to us; it bore the inscription *Chermes vermilis*; then he poured out accurately, into another test-tube, a dose of 605 together with an infusion of cochineal and held up the liqueur. That same evening was adopted the

"606" *Apéritif de Capri*.

Three weeks after the manufacture of the first ten hecto-



litres the *apéritif* was complete. One had only to wait for the seasoning of the liqueur, but there was time for that, since a little delay would occur before the bottles could be furnished, and Christmas was fixed upon for bringing the *apéritif* into the market.

It was in the early days of December that the news was brought from Germany; in scientific reviews, first of all. Then all the press began to talk about it, to talk about 606.

Lovatti could not make it out. He asked:

"Do they mean my *apéritif*?"

"No. They refer to a preparation of arsenic and benzol . . . Salvarsan."

He was still in the dark . . . What about that number? It was his discovery, that number 606 . . . It was he who had put on the market a liqueur with that number, and not a common number either . . . That number was his own notion and inspiration.

In order to console him they said it must be coincidence; there might yet be time to put things right.

Then he heard that Hata was leaving, from Naples, for Japan and went to interview him; but Hata said he had no interest in the commercial aspects of the discovery; a syndicate would doubtless see to that. Why not go straight to Ehrlich, the joint inventor of 606?

Lovatti left for Germany and met Ehrlich at Jena. But there was nothing more to be done; a syndicate had been formed and the trade-mark registered 606, for intra-venous injection.

On his return to Capri, Lovatti could not be induced to talk about it; he merely said: "A coincidence."

And perhaps he believed it. Or perhaps he knew the truth, namely that von Knapp was Ehrlich's assistant and his lost soul.

Yes; he guessed that there was a theft at the bottom of the affair, but he always believed it to be a coincidence.

He emptied those ten hectolitres of the *apéritif* down a drain, and decided to sell the sample 605, without the cochin-

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real tint, as a medicinal digestive liqueur. He could have utilised the same bottles, changing only their labels; he could even have given it the commonplace name of "Certosina." He possessed 10,000 bottles and 20,000 labels of parchment-paper with coloured lettering, one for the front and the other for the back of the bottle. But when it was a question of beginning the manufacture over again the Bordeaux firm which had supplied him on credit with the alcohol for his 606, refused to give any more credit for the Certosina. That is why the Certosina was never manufactured though it continues to remain the only medicinal digestive Capri liqueur distilled from all the perfumes of the island's aromatic flora, and as the label indicates composed largely of cinnamon and coriander, of myrtle, thyme, mountain heath, rue and mallow . . .

Those ten thousand bottles of Certosina could never be filled because Lovatti could never manufacture the Certosina itself; everything was ready, all the fragrant perfumes of Capri but alcohol was lacking. After Lovatti's death the bottles went off like hot cakes; tourists bought them as keepsakes, because they contained Capri air. A few still remain, and you can buy them at a secondhand dealers! A bottle, with its two labels of parchment paper and coloured letterings intact, with the stamp of sealing-wax and its motto "*Frangar non lectar*"—an original bottle of the Certosina, empty, will cost you about a hundred francs. That seems dear; but let it be remembered that Chartreuse, which used to be sold at eighteen francs, is now worth fifty, and Grand-Marnier sixty-five. . . .

Such are post-war prices.





THE COLLECTION OF MACROLEPIDOPTERA



IF you are interested in old pictures it is possible that von Lepel will receive you courteously at the Villa Papilio, and he may also show you his Umbrian ceramics; he may even display the enamelled plate with metallic reflections attributed to Maestro Giorgio da Gubbio; if you insist he will also unfold his Sardinian carpets; but the macrolepidoptera he will only show to his most intimate friends, because he does not wish to be annoyed, and has had more than his share of annoyance over them. After the scandal at the Villa Papilio the collection was sequestered for three months.

He will willingly show you his pictures; first of all the Ghirlandaio—a fine panel in a good state of preservation and quite authentic—then a Piero della Francesca, well executed but slightly worm-eaten; an imitation Tintoretto, a copy of the Sacred and Profane Love, and a replica of a Veronese; four or five examples of the Flemish school and the Durer prints . . .

It is only if you inspire exceptional confidence that von Lepel unlocks his macrolepidoptera, or at least those which can be shown; because there are some that he will not even allow his most intimate friends to see.

The collection of macrolepidoptera is entirely contained in the long corridor that forms the body of the villa which lies behind a double row of cypresses on the Migliara road. At Anacapri they call the Villa Papilio "Poggioreale," suggesting, perhaps on account of the cypresses, that it resembles a cemetery; but really there is nothing in its exterior to recall the Naples Camposanto. Inside, perhaps, yes—the niches in



which the cabinets of specimens are disposed resemble filing shelves in the archives of a limited company. In Naples they keep their dead as if they were documents, or store them in lockers like those in the safe deposit of a bank. And that is how von Lepel keeps his macrolepidoptera: all along the walls of the corridors on shelves divided into cabinets, in little drawers, with obituary notes on the species and variety, and morphological information as to the peculiarities of the individual. Five or six hundred cabinets, three or four thousand cases, two or three hundred thousand little boxes; in every little box the corpse of a macrolepidopter, with accessories.

The *Ropolaceri*, with seven families, in seven niches are on the right; the *Heteroceri*, more numerous with twenty-five families, on the left; in the two orders combined there are thirty-two families and two or three hundred thousand specimens. When you consider that each specimen is preserved with its female, its chrysalis, its caterpillar, its cocoon and its eggs, you arrive at the figure of two or three million specimens.

It is the richest collection in Capri and is also the most curious. We have, for example, the collection of indecent drawings, at the Villa Lysia; there was once a collection of opium pipes in the Villa Osiris, and in guide books you will find references to the library of the English misanthrope, Mr. Bedding, which is mainly interesting for the way in which standard religious works alternate with purely pornographic volumes—where you may find, as in a sandwich, the Memoirs of Casanova between the Lives of the Holy Fathers and the Little Flowers of St. Francis, or the romances of Paul de Kock beside the *Legenda Sanctorum*. But in each of these collections, there are two or three hundred, or at the most, two or three thousand specimens, while Von Lepel's collection of macrolepidoptera comprises two or three hundred thousand, all determined, classified and catalogued.

Now in all nature there are not two hundred thousand macrolepidoptera. But in this collection we are not dealing with nature. Von Lepel has made his collection at Capri, and

his macrolepidoptera are not ordinary, natural ones; they are macrolepidoptera with some special characteristic, anomalies in fact. That is why his collection is unique; and that also is why it could only have been made in Capri.

A scientist would hesitate to believe that any one could find so many macrolepidoptera unless he knew von Lepel's method. Von Lepel's macrolepidoptera are, as you might say, home-made. When you see all those little butterfly corpses, those mummy-like chrysalides, those dried up caterpillars resting in their little boxes like so many tombs, you get the impression of von Lepel as a grave-digger who has made himself a magnificent cemetery, well kept and disinfected with naphthaline, a grave-digger who might multiply for ever the bitter ecstasy of Hamlet's meditations over the skull of Yorick.

Von Lepel is not only the grave-digger, he is, above all, the midwife and the wet-nurse of his macrolepidoptera; he brings them into the world, raises them, nourishes them and then chloroforms them: his is the ecstasy of Hamlet extended over an entire cycle of life. Grave-digger, midwife, wet-nurse and something more: pander! Most certainly—because it is he himself who arranges the marriage of the rarest specimens; he is the match-maker of the Capri butterflies. When you have thought of all these things, you can begin to see how he has managed to form a collection of two or three hundred thousand specimens.

Von Lepel does not reveal to you the details of his technique; his gynecological practice is his secret. He obtains, however, the most surprising effects, producing certain macrolepidoptera which cannot even be shown, and which he keeps locked up in a special safe. If you ask him how he has managed to obtain so many specimens, he shrugs his shoulders and does not answer, or, if he does answer, he merely says:

"This Capri air!"

But the thing is not so difficult to explain as that; even in nature, cases of abnormality amongst the macrolepidoptera have been recorded: dimorphism, parasitism, hybridism,



protective mimicry, cases of involution, genetic deviations and inversions.

Think of the variations which are obtained by artificial selection, of the morphological peculiarities the eggs can present, of the number of external factors which can influence the entire process of metamorphosis, acting on the larva, on the chrysalis, on the perfect insect! Take for example, any pair of butterflies, and imagine that the male and female show, naturally, some idiosyncrasy: we will imagine that of lateral dimorphism in the male and a deviation or a stricture or a nervous spasm of the egg-depositing tube, in the female. Naturally one must select subjects with well marked hereditary peculiarities. In an ordinary clutch of butterfly eggs there are usually fifty to sixty: in Capri one hundred to one hundred and fifty is normal. Just wait for the moment of laying and observe the eggs; to determine their specific external character a good magnifying glass is enough; but if you want to go further into the biogenetic examination and follow the embryonic changes, a microscope and a microtome will be needed. Embedded in paraffin and cut into sections of a thousandth part of a millimetre, the eggs of the macrolepidoptera will reveal their microscopic secrets. But even to the naked eye or under a good lens, they will disclose a wide field of morphological complications.

You will see them collected in little clusters, glued or clinging to a leaf, or wrapped in fantastic spirals round a twig; or hung between two stalks in a delicate curved chain of milky iridescent pearls. The shapes are just as various; globular, oval, spheroidal, tubular, hemispherical, helicoid; flattened or conical; swollen or deflated; soft, flaccid, turgid or rigid; smooth or rough; coarsely or finely granular; velvety or silken; viscous, glabrous, or glutinous. Again, the material of their envelopes varies. Sometimes it is fleshy, sometimes cartilaginous, horny or chitinous. Their colour is exotically delicate, here iridescent, whitish, there verging on a decided yellow, blue, or bistre. Some are faintly spotted, some clearly striped or unevenly dotted or lined, or rimmed with circles or plaided

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with little squares. But if you would perceive far greater wonders do not stop at their gross external features; delve deeper into their mystery; observe the mechanism by which the eggs are closed and find the exit of the future larva. Consider all the possible varieties of mechanism that seal the tiny being in its embryonic prison. You will see eggs equipped with a pressure diaphragm, with a dovetailed lid, with a ringed seating, with a spring cover, with ball-valves and needle-valves and valves on universal joints.

To your inexperienced eye those are the only external features that the egg of a lepidopter will present; but think of the embryological possibilities that it can reveal to the eye and the microscope of a Von Lepell

Even he has not time to contemplate that mysterious plasm which imprisons the first life-secrets of those creatures which are the joy of his existence; he has scarcely time to make a daily collection of the eggs which are accumulating in his Vivarium, because his day is spent in ministering to the needs of a whole population of caterpillars from among which he must select abnormal specimens for further development. The birth of the caterpillars is perhaps the most impressive phase of his experiments, but it is also the beginning of the most arduous toil: for he will have to select his subjects from thousands of beings, smooth or scaly, fleshy, hairy, or bristly; from larvæ flat or cylindrical with threatening spines, with shaggy horns and warts furnished with little tufts of hair secreting acrid, viscid, slimy or poisonous humours; a population of caterpillars, greedy and omnivorous, crawling, twisting, extending, shrinking, twining themselves into loathsome coils, moving on multiple fleshy feet, contorting their swollen bellies into obscene nodules.

The matchmaker who has arranged the marriage of the butterfly, the obstetrician who has assisted the travail of laying, transforms himself at this stage into the caterer whose office it is to feed that squirming host. At this point von Lepel begins to know the joy and the bitterness of a nursemaid.

Left to themselves the caterpillars—the ordinary, normal



caterpillars—would pounce upon a lettuce leaf, or the heart of a cabbage and devour it, because they are born rich in the experience that an entire life does not teach man.

As soon as a normal caterpillar sees the light—even through its prismatic, insect eyelets—it takes its place in the universe with a knowledge of the tree of good and evil; which means that it can distinguish between nourishing and merely indigestible leaves. Von Lepel knows that this knowledge does no good—to his collection at any rate. A larva that grows and is nourished normally on the resources which nature offers will never produce an abnormal insect fit for his collection. A macrolepidopterologist of his type aims at bringing psychopathic influences to bear on the development of his insects. He begins to modify their nature by his choice of their food, just like the bees, who when they want to raise a queen prepare a special pap for the larva. In macrolepidopterology however, the problem is much more complicated than in apiculture. Von Lepel would not know what to do with a perfect female; to him every larva represents an accumulator of psychopathic potential. Each larva, according to its latent genetic predisposition has a preference for some particular nutriment. While one will be content with its lettuce leaf, another will just nibble a cabbage heart; while one is greedy for verbena, another fancies leaves of rue; while one devours marjoram, another must be brought up on a milk diet—on the milk of the euphorbia. By these variations of diet you can produce all the influences which govern the metamorphosis that gives us the perfect butterfly.

Von Lepel, by the patient work of many years, has applied the metempyric method (which rightly belongs to metaphysics) to the study of entomology. So, when at last, by the ordinary process of transformation his egg arrives at the stage which entomologists call “the perfect insect,” in other words a macrolepidopter of full organic efficiency, the final result is, invariably, imperfect, presenting a determined, a premeditated anomaly. For a good collection of macrolepidoptera this is most important; if it were not for its abnormalities and special

idiosyncrasies, von Lepel's collection would only number at the most a thousand specimens, like all other collections of normal butterflies.

Von Lepel, in selecting the parents, and the eggs (and we have seen how many morphological varieties of the egg there can be), and influencing the taste, the humour, the digestion and the temperament of the caterpillar by a special choice of food produces psychopathic modifications in the character of the chrysalis which will reveal themselves as a perfect anomaly in the butterfly. Thus he obtains in one hatch fifty—at Capri two or three times as many—butterflies presenting the most unexpected complications. One will have feathered scales, another scales that are sinuous, imbricated, overlapping, raised or adherent; one may have club-like antennae, the antennae of others will be fusiform, bristly, fimbriated, hooked, serrated, toothed, feathered, fringed, clawed, pedunculate, striped, plumed, raspy or spined . . . Each of which is a case of unilateral dimorphism derived from one of the parents affected by that anomaly.

Maternal imperfections, anomalies, inversions or idiosyncrasies can modify the whole epithelial system of the offspring, producing butterflies with flat, bristly or silky down; they can affect the nature of the powder on the wings, making its corpuscles granulated, rayed, prismatic, tubular, spherical or oval. The manner in which the scales are attached may differentiate specimens: with some they are set on hooks, with some on peduncles, with others they may be held by elastic sheaths.

The egg-laying tube of the female has also specific peculiarities: it may be pointed, lipped, bell-mouthed, funnel-shaped, locally constricted, valved at the aperture of the sperm-sac, or fitted with a vesicle that secretes the glutinous matter required for fixing the eggs.

Then there are varieties of wing-figmentation: unimaginable stripes, fantastic markings, novelties in the way of spots, areas of iridescence all mixed together.

If, leaving the field of gross anatomical variety, one passes



to that of pathological and psychopathic degenerations, determined by climatic, thermal, radio-active and mimetic circumstances of environment, you will see that the work of the collector is multiplied a hundredfold. He must differentiate his specimens even further—separating macrolepidoptera affected with a squint in the prismatic eyelets from those afflicted with cirrhosis of the liver, isolating cases of bilateral hermaphroditism from those of sexual dimorphism; eliminating female insects from those affected with other deviations of the genetic sense.

If Von Lepel were only a macrolepidopterist, the wonder which his patient industry arouses would be great enough; it becomes far greater when you realize that he is also an artist. He is not only the most assiduous macrolepidopterist in the world, but also the busiest painter on the island. Unfortunately he is not a landscape painter—he does not live on Faraglioni and Blue Grottoes; he is a portrait painter and he lives on prelates.

He paints prelates. Of course, when he has the chance, he also paints Roman Emperors, politicians, diplomats and princesses; but his forte is apostolic nunzios, domestic prelates, papal chamberlains and knights of Cape and Sword. For the raw material of his pictures he has to go to the Vatican; that is his chosen field. Give him a Cardinal, and in three sittings he has done with him. If on the other hand, you give him a commission to do a callisthenic dancer, he will not refuse, of course, but the result will disappoint you: his manner is always that of a Palatine portrait painter, a Pontifical colourist, and the dancer, in a purple mantle, a frilled skirt, (suitable for the altar steps) and violet stockings, ends by resembling a young Cardinal of the Cinquecento.

His portraits of prelates are always painted between spring and summer; I do not know why, but I know that it is so; it must be a tradition. Between the end of May and the beginning of June, Von Lepel leaves Capri and goes to Rome to paint the portraits of new Cardinals, or nunzios returned from

abroad, or apostolic protonotaries who are leaving on a mission.

As luck will have it, it is just at that time that the butterflies begin to lay, and early in June there are always four or five thousand caterpillars to feed at the Villa Papilio. Von Lepel does not take them all with him on his journey—that would be quite impossible—he only takes with him the most urgent cases, a couple of thousand at the most. But even so, travelling with two thousand caterpillars is no joke.

First of all there is the victualling: there are two thousand breakfasts, two thousand lunches and two thousand dinners—six thousand meals a day to be provided; and the diet must be varied, otherwise good-bye to idiosyncrasies; you need the milk of the euphorbia, the juice of the prickly pear, mulberry leaves and loquat pulp . . . With two thousand caterpillars to feed on the journey Von Lepel has no rest. Think also of the difficulty of transport; it isn't that the caterpillars occupy much space—a big trunk with compartments is sufficient for them—but great care is needed. Of course you must have a separate trunk in reserve for the cocoons; some days after their birth the larvae begin to spin, and having made a selection of the rarest specimens you must provide a comfortable lodging for the chrysalis.

When von Lepel has painted the portraits of five or six prelates, he returns to Capri with the big trunk for the larvae empty, and the little trunk for the cocoons full. Then he begins to classify, catalogue, and determine the anomalies which in the meantime have been born and chloroformed.

And thus the collection of the macrolepidoptera grows year by year; now, as I have said, there are two or three hundred thousand; but in a few years . . . ?

The collection grows steadily. It is really wonderful—think of the care, the patience, the devotion that must have gone to the making of it, as von Lepel has made it! Each specimen in its little cardboard box, as in a family tomb: the female on the right of the male; the full and the empty cocoons, the chrysalis, the egg and a leaf of the plant on which it was nourished.



In the evening von Lepel is tired out; he feeds, tends his caterpillars for the last time and goes to bed.

Does he sleep peacefully? Or is his sleep disturbed by troubled dreams, by fearful incubi and succubi, by visions of monstrous caterpillars and spectral chrysalides? But then, what are nocturnal horrors, fearsome dreams—what are all the labour, forethought and anxiety compared with the glory of a macrolepidopterist who, before death, can say that he has reached his goal?

That glory is his already. Von Lepel has reached his goal: he owns the only specimen of a caterpillar which no other macrolepidopterist possesses.

He keeps it in a safe which is hidden behind a curtain, between the two lateral wings of the corridor, between the *Ropolaceri* and the *Heterolaceri*. In that safe there are other rare specimens; there is a pair of butterflies which he only shows to a few intimates, but this caterpillar he will not even show to them. We know that he has it, because it is mentioned, with two similar caterpillars, in all entomological textbooks; it is listed in the *Ropholacera Europea* of Staudiger, it is cited by Rebel and illustrated by De Johannis in *Macrolepidopteren des paleartischen Faunengebiets*: it is the larva of *Pieris rapae*, the grub of the common white cabbage butterfly. But it is not a common grub, it is a caterpillar which, owing to an effect of hereditary psychopathy has been arrested in its development and is less than three-quarters of an inch in length.

The grub of the common cabbage butterfly, reaches, normally an inch and a half, and infests our cabbages, our turnips, our salads and all the green stuffs of our gardens; Von Lepel's specimen is the only one of less than an inch. Entomological literature mentions three, but the one in the British Museum, described by Peabody in *Butterflies of the British Isles* is an imperfect specimen: it lacks the seventh leg, at the third abdominal ring, and the one in Vienna of the *K. u. K. Entomologische Sammlung*, was attacked during the war by a clothes moth that ate up all its inside, so that

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nothing remains but the skin, a miserable little tube of empty chitin.

The only perfect specimen is von Lepel's. It is a little desiccated worm, with dorsal markings of dirty yellow and a green-brown belly. It has sixteen legs, intact, and stinks of naphthaline.





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ROLF PFEIFFER, the famous echinocereologist, came to Capri while he was still secretary of the *Deutsche Kakteengesellschaft*, with the idea of making experiments on the rejuvenation of the senile *cefalocereus*, which in Mexico, the country of its origin, is called the *Cabeza de viejo* on account of the long white beard which covers it, and which at Capri, owing perhaps to the effect of the air or some other circumstance of its environment, seems disposed to lose these attributes of senility.

Pfeiffer grafted onto the stem of the *Cephalocereus senilis* the globular seed of the *Cereus erectus* and obtained a vigorous hybrid in which the white and shaggy hair of the Mexican species was replaced by a soft down, like the beard of an adolescent.

The first graftings had such a surprising result that Pfeiffer thought of founding an experimental institute of vegetable surgery in Capri. On the strength of them he formed a new society, the *Fettpflanzenliebhabergesellschaft*, which prospered for several years, and whose organ, the *Zeitschrift der Kakteenkunde*, seven numbers of which appeared, is treasured to-day as a bibliographical rarity.

The presence of Pfeiffer on Capri and the lucky result of his researches were sufficient to attract several of the most noted scientists of the time to the island, and very soon the eminent echinocereologist had gathered round him a group of German investigators who made it an important centre for the study of natural history. It was, in fact, during Pfeiffer's time that the



names of our most illustrious visitors are recorded. The two brothers Max and Siegfried Pappenheim, the geologists, came to study the tectonic of the extremity of the Appennine *massif* which ends at Capri, and to determine the chronology of our limestone. Then came Ravel, the coleopterist who discovered a blind microscopic beetle; Branntwein, the arachnologist, to whom we owe the theory which connects, or attempts to connect, the origin of the tarantella with the bite of the tarantula, and Wladimir Lutzky who tramped all the way from Vilna to Capri to study the nervous system of the millepede. The lesser stars who gravitated around Pfeiffer were innumerable; and the tourist industry which up till then had thriven on artists and writers, began to assume in his day a professorial tone. In the country lanes there was a coming and going of spectacled gentlemen armed with implements of scientific research; some in diving-suits—like Steinecke the marine biologist—who descended into the sea every day to observe the sexual relations of echinoderms in their natural state; some with geological hammers, others with butterfly-nets or botanical cases.

In the evening at the *Zum Kater*, the famous café, the members of the Society of the *Naturfreunde*—the “friends of nature”—gathered around a big *stammtisch* to exchange ideas, communicate the results of research or improvise new experiments; one would be dissecting a live beetle to show its digestive organs working, while another displayed an unclassified orchid and spread the pollen on the pistil of a known species to obtain a new hybrid. That noisy table was a gay and happy sight with all those plump, boisterous naturalists, their round and rosy heads like rolls of bacon, exuding the exuberant vitality which thrives on that particular atmosphere of smoke and beer-fumes and perspiration which characterises the closed places in which Germans gather together to give relief to the collegiate spirit, and show the gregarious instinct of their race.

At the head of the table sat Pfeiffer, grave and pontifical in his Tyrolese costume of green corduroy with horn buttons; and

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every time he defined a principle or furnished an explanation he raised his glass and said: *Prosit!* Next to him sat the entomologist, Schleff, a solemn and ridiculous figure in a big hat on the brim of which he had fastened festoons of butterflies, trembling on pins in a slow agony.

After two or three hours of serious conversation Pfeiffer would give the signal for the *Salamanderreiben*: the "friends of nature" rose to their feet, clinked and rubbed their beer glasses, emptied them with one gulp and intoned in chorus their college hymn:

Studere studere

Post mortem, quid valere?

Edamus, bibamus, gaudeamus. . .

But as soon as the zoologist Eimer and the ereptologist von Bedriaga arrived on the island, Pfeiffer, who had always been very reserved, began to show signs of restlessness, even of melancholy. These two rivals naturalists had come to Capri to study the azure colouration of the Faraglioni lizard and were soon launched on a controversy about the pigmentation of this graceful reptile's skin which resulted in a triumph for Eimer. It was Eimer, in fact, who presented the *Lacerta coerulea faraglioniensis* as a typical and conclusive case of evolution by natural selection in a lizard which was found isolated or detached from the original stock of the *Lacerta muralis elegans*, and ended by placing the Darwinian theory in an unshakable position on the granite bases of the Faraglioni.

It seems a strange provision of fate that Capri, which had thus finally established Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, should later have originated through the work of Rolff Pfeiffer a movement in the opposite direction. It was here, in Capri that the famous echinocereologist evolved the dangerous doctrine which still bears his name, and began experiments in the retrogression of vertebrates to which, fortunately, a conscientious police inspector, the unforgettable Cleofonte Sborrelli, put an end.



As soon as Pfeiffer had brought his experiments in the rejuvenation of the senile *cefalocereus* to a successful conclusion, and had seen the possibility of making the island the greatest cactus centre in the world, he asked for and obtained the concession of certain uncultivated crown lands where the precipices of Matromania drop in vast circular terraces to a halcyon sea. An ancient tradition—based on a fanciful suggestion made by the Curator of Natural Beauties—insists that this land had been the site of the famous gardens of Caligula and that there the future tyrant, when still a stripling, concealed his liaison with Drusilla and later assumed the *toga virilis*.

The Curator had even gone so far as to ascertain, from a list of plants compiled by Moderato Columella, in 61 A.D., that one hundred and sixty plants of the classical flora, had adorned the Gardens of Caligula, but of which none remain except the *edera helix*, which still clings proudly to the ruins of Roman cistern-mouths, a few cork-trees, under the shade of which the poet Blaesus composed his famous verse on Capri wine; a few Tarantine myrtles and the dwarf laurels sacred to Tiberius—those myrtles and those laurels recalled in the nostalgic lines:

Et vos, o lauri, et te, proxima myrte

Sic positae quoniam suaves miscetis odores . . .

Pfeiffer destroyed the last traces of the Vergilian flora in the Gardens of Caligula, and erected, below, his mysterious house, the Villa Euphorbia, all in blocks of concrete. In a few years he transformed the natural flora of that area, substituting for our indigenous species a rich vegetation of succulent and spiny plants.

The main path leading to the Villa Euphorbia was bordered by enormous *cerei* from the Andes placed at regular intervals, like rigid vegetable sentinels of threatening aspect. It passed through three ledges planted with prickly pears to the semi-circular terrace which still carries traces, in *opus reticulatum*, of Caligula's *Ephebeum*. All around, following the twisted line of the ruins, there were disposed, in formal groups or irregular

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clusters, a series of monstrous agaves from Texas with pointed spurs like daggers; and between the crevices of the rocks, and on the precipitous slopes of the mountain, around the shapeless ruins and the remains of water-tanks, the strange limbs of a varied and fantastic vegetation spread their shadows. There were mysembryanthemums, some fragile, whose fronds drooped in a dew of greeny drops, others set in dense and fleshy tufts, clamped to the rocks by fingers fashioned like a werewolf's claws. There were *filocerei* writhing like serpents, which pursued and interlaced each other in obscene embraces; there were *mammillarii* hairy and swollen with thick unhealthy sap; obese and awkward branches of *portulacea*, and thick masses of *stapelia*, starred with sombre flowers, distilling viscous humours and releasing odours of putrescence whose poisonous emanations overpowered the aromatic perfume of the *sertula coronaria*, last remnant of the ancient flora which had escaped destruction, and still gladdened that place of old delight now transformed into an inferno of fleshy, spiny things.

Again, higher up, where the mountain overhangs in cataracts of dolomitic limestone and becomes so steep as to be almost unclimbable, a path flanked by thick hedges of *Opuntia horrendifolia* led to a little cave where the very rarest stapelias, those whose petals resemble morsels of decomposed flesh, were preserved.

All around the Villa Euphorbia there were spines and spines and spines: the delicate spines, some almost hair-like, of the *opuntias* moving their flat, fat, fleshy palms, like people clamorous and frenzied with sadic voluptuousness clapping their hands to applaud come cruel spectacle: spines of the spectral cylindrical *cerei*, stretched in a long procession; spines of the *pilocerei* and of the *filocerei*; spines of the *epifilli*, of *filocacti*, of *ripsaliae aculeatae*, of *melocactus*, *echinocactus* and of *echinopsis*.

And all this hell of lacerating, pungent things was the work of Pfeiffer; it was the ultimate expression of a man who had transformed a palace of pleasure into a nightmare of



vegetable fury, into a torture-chamber of primordial nature.

The Gardens of Caligula had always been a favourite objective for sentimental walks; their discreet solitude offered every pair of lovers a safe refuge: how many sweet sighs had been breathed in that place!

But a perverse desire, the sadic will of the echinocereologist Pfeiffer had now destroyed for ever the poetry of that region and moved the greatest depository of passionate sighs on all the island. As if to signify his will, Pfeiffer had built into the arch over his garden gate a majolica tablet with the monitory inscription:

VILLA EUPHORBIA

Qui s'y frotte s'y pique.

.

A little more than a year after the beginning of his experiments in rejuvenating *cefalocereus senilis*, the rumour began to circulate that Pfeiffer had had a failure. The *cefalocerei* had been introduced into Capri by an English General. They had rapidly become acclimatised and every garden possessed superb specimens. The first results of grafting were wonderfully successful; rejuvenation became a mania and nearly every *cefalocereus* on the island was treated by Pfeiffer's method. But later on, all the owners of these rare cacti were to learn, with horror, that the rejuvenated specimens, after having lost their thick white hair and grown a blonde down, first sickened, and then rapidly declined; their stems dried up and the poor plants ended by dying of an excess of youth. Two years later everyone was speaking openly of Pfeiffer's failure. He appeared less frequently at the meetings of the Friends of Nature; and on one of the last occasions on which he visited the café he declared his intention of abandoning cactology for ever.

His colleagues could not account for this tragic decision on the part of one who only a few months before had achieved a graft that promised to improve the whole cactus economy of the island. He had succeeded in largely increasing the secretion of the *Mamillaria venusta*. As everybody knows, the milk of

this particular cactus is used by the coleopterists and the lepidopterists to nourish ailing caterpillars. Von Lepel, the macrolepidopterist of Anacapri, by using this milk, supplied by the Villa Euphorbia, succeeded in obtaining a grub of the genus *Attacus* that weighed two ounces. Lovatti, the artist, went even further: he had thought of raising, and exporting as a food-stuff, the *Attacus Yama-Mai*, which would not only have benefited Capri but also might have saved the whole province of Pechili in China, which exists almost exclusively on the *Attacus Yama-Mai* . . . The plant at Villa Euphorbia had also been adapted for the exploitation of cactus by-products, and an English inventor, Algernon Pinion, had already made a contract to take over the thorns of *Cereus spinosissimus* which Pfeiffer, by successive graftings, had succeeded in hardening and making tenacious, foreseeing that their production on a large scale would revolutionize the trade in gramophone needles.

But evidently not even these financial allurements were enough to make Pfeiffer modify his decision.

One evening, at the *Zum Kater*, he declared that he had renounced the completion of his opus magnum, *Iconographia Cactacearum*, and handed in his resignation as president of the Society of Cultivators of Succulent Plants.

His friends were very much alarmed: they tried in vain to dissuade him, and finally lost their patience. Somebody began to murmur: "This Capri air?"

Alas, it was only too true. That Capri air had gone to Pfeiffer's head.

A few months afterwards his pamphlet *Rückkehr zur Sonne—Entwurf einer Weltphilosophie*, appeared.

In *Rückkehr zur Sonne* (Return to the Sun) we find that first design as yet unformed and embryonic, of the theory of evolution which later absorbed all Dr. Rolff Pfeiffer's scientific activity. The pamphlet, substantially, was conceived as a counterblast to the Manifesto of Mediterranean Beauty, which the Curator of Natural Beauties had launched from



Capri to reveal to the intellectuals of the whole world the Way of the Sun. Pfeiffer began by denying to the Mediterranean race, which found its highest expression in the natural beauty of Capri, the possession of that directive faculty which the Curator assigned to them, and gave to the Germans the mission of leading humanity back to its solar sources. According to the Pangermanic conception adumbrated by Pfeiffer, all life should be led back, through the multiple channels of the sun, toward its heliogenetic origin. It must have been this first flash of transcendental vision that influenced his scientific mind and lured on his eager spirit by hinting at the possibility of a backward movement in evolution, that had reached, in man, the zenith of a curve from which Pfeiffer deduced a universal law of closed cyclical functions. He took up a position diametrically opposed to Goethe's theory of species progressively unfolding in conic spirals with successive recurrent cycles, in horizontal projection and successive elevations in the orthogonal plane; and conceived the structure of the universe to be that of a sphere in which every section, perfectly closed within itself, represented a cycle of evolution and involution proceeding simultaneously.

He had the intuition that the German race was destined to guide humanity through its phase of inversion. The light of the world came from the North, *das Nordlicht*, and was the heritage of the Nordic race.

Although he followed in the footprints of other German thinkers, Pfeiffer was the first German who gave doctrinal form and philosophic substance to a fundamental truth which other philosophers of his race had already divined—the truth that had been exalted by poets and foretold by military writers like Treitschke and von Bernhardi. As pure theory, his conception rested on the planetary structure of the universe as established by Kant; but Pfeiffer went further than either Kant or Laplace, and saw the German race as a light-house arising on the uttermost boundaries of possibility, beyond which humanity neither should, nor could advance.

In *Rückkehr zur Sonne* he wrote: "The earth appears to me as a fragment of the planetary system launched into space by the conflagration of all the suns. We humans swarm upon the cooling crust of a minute spheroid carrying in its heart a core of fiery matter, pure solar substance detached from our sun, and always tending by gravitation to rejoin it. All living things on earth—plants, animals, men—are forces, channels of force betwixt the earth and the sun. Granted that the earth attains its greatest thickness at the North Pole, it follows that the light of the North, *das Nordlicht*, the German light, the spiritual emanation of the Nordic race, is the quintessence of life. It is a purer light because it is filtered through the greater density of the spheroid's Northern protuberance."

It was by reason of this vision that Pfeiffer denied to the Mediterranean race, whose mission the Curator of Natural Beauties had exalted, the right of directing humanity on the Way of the Sun.

The Mediterranean, as he continued to aver, was a stagnant pool in which the first brachycephalic peoples were born—in which, also, they now lay dead and rotted, infecting the whole world: the first brachycephalic and Semetic civilisations, which the Nordic race had providentially crushed! And then concluding his passionate peroration, he writes:

"The Mediterranean is the world's evil conscience which fouls the springs of life. Upon its shores both man and beast have become the confused tribute of nature to earth, a manure which enriches a soil destined to cultivate the lowest passions: its very fecundity is appalling . . . It is from Capri, where Mediterranean civilisation has reached its lowest ebb, that the inversion of the process of evolution should begin—it is from Capri, I say, that the tide of involution must be initiated, the world's return toward its original light, toward the Eternal Unconceived, the Inconceivable, toward the Unborn: *das Ewig Ungeboren!*"

In *Rückkehr zur Sonne*—which is the first manifestation of his new thought—Pfeiffer enunciates nothing but an abstract theory; it is merely a vague note on the manner in which the



process of involution—a gradual return to the original forms of life—should be accomplished.

For some time after the publication of his pamphlet, very little was heard of Pfeiffer. He was seen no more in public, but shut himself up in the Villa Euphorbia for weeks on end. It was said that he spent his time in making experiments that people later described as sadist practices but which were, in fact, no more than his first attempts at artificial involution.

The last and rather turbulent public appearance that the famous echinocereologist made ended by estranging the sympathies of his remaining friends. The Curator of Natural Beauties had followed up his first Manifesto by issuing an appeal for the creation of a World Centre of Intellectual Production and Protection. It proposed to gather within the walls of the old Carthusian monastery at Capri, artists, poets, naturalists and famous dancers . . . in short all the cosmopolitan crowd which normally frequented the island and abandoned themselves to the usual temptations of idleness and sterile pleasures, in that complete liberty which only too often degenerates into unproductive debauchery. The Curator proposed that the "intellectuals" should be enclosed within those majestic cloisters, as their predecessors had been gathered together in the Cage of the Muses founded by Alexander. They would be maintained there at the expense of the League of Nations and, as you will gather from the regulations which were formulated during the Curator's term of office, each one would be expected to produce a minimum of one masterpiece a year.

A permanent committee, *Pro-Intelligentia*, was formed to carry out the Curator's ambitious programme, and the German colony decided to give a final proof of their faith in Pfeiffer by choosing him to represent their interests on the committee which was destined to formulate concrete proposals for the working of the Intellectual Centre. At the first meeting Pfeiffer made a concrete proposal which threw discredit on the infant institution. He proposed that all the men of genius assembled within its walls should set a good

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example by submitting themselves to an operation by which he might initiate, in the most highly evolved specimens of the human race, the involution of species.

He guaranteed that the operation performed under an anaesthetic would be painless; it would consist in grafting on to every artist, philosopher or writer, nervous ganglions, glands, caudal appendages, possibly the entire viscera of anthropoid and lesser apes. By such an experiment one would be able to arrive by a gradual series of inversions, at Neanderthal man, at *pithecanthropus erectus*, at the Missing Link, and, finally, if he were very lucky, at the gorilla.

Pfeiffer's proposal was received with open hostility. He ended by finding himself isolated, abandoned, or as he himself put it, betrayed by all his chosen supporters of other days: the two Pappenheims, Ravel, Samuel Ochs, Eimer and von Bedriaga. The whole group of the Friends of Nature deserted him; he could not even count on German science!

But he did not despair. He would have to make his experiments alone. And, what is more, he would have results to show!

When the "results" of the great experiments which Pfeiffer had proposed to perform in Capri appeared, they seemed somewhat pathetic compared with the vastness of what he had promised. To-day they are only remembered in connection with the "Mystery of the Villa Euphorbia," an affair which one must recall with horror, because of the sadic character of the work to which the famous echinocereologist dedicated his activities.

In a short time the villa itself was entirely transformed. All the cactus vegetation around it rapidly died, and during the short period in which the new experiments were performed, that mysterious dwelling was populated by fearful fancies which fed upon its impenetrability and certain strange noises—the cries of birds, hisses of reptiles, curious lowings and bleatings—that awakened sinister echoes in the tortuous chasms of the Matromania valley at night.



The "Mystery of The Villa Euphorbia" would perhaps have remained unsolved if the perspicacity and the fine intuition of our Inspector of Police Sborrelli had not revealed its latent horror on the first occasion when that functionary found himself face to face with the dangerous naturalist.

As soon as he arrived at Capri, Sborrelli had netted the gang of nocturnal thieves whose secret headquarters were the Communal Prison: he was later immortalised in one or two detective operations, that made the island's records a *locus classicus* in applied criminology. But Inspector Sborrelli did not rest on his laurels; he belonged, as he used to say, to the school of Sherlock Holmes and scented crime everywhere. Using nothing but local materials, which were scanty and unpromising, he enriched the island's criminal reputation enormously. Only think what there was to be done among the foreign colony! "Just wait till a suspect foreigner falls into my hands," said Inspector Sborrelli, "I'll give him beans!"

Unfortunately at that time, all the foreigners were suspected of something or other, and with only three or four *carabinieri* one could hardly manage to handcuff seven or eight hundred of them. It pleased Sborrelli to think of the island as a vast concentration camp, with all the foreign colony surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by his three *carabinieri* with loaded rifles. . . . At the first sign of insubordination he would have shouted: Fire! and made a hecatomb. . . . He saw a Capri—finally freed from adventurers, scoured clean of the refuse of Europe—purified: all the islanders in prison, in the great communal jail, and all the foreigners in a concentration camp. . . .

The English colony was the first to fire Inspector Sborrelli's criminological zeal: there were the Primitive Poets—so primitive that they had been nicknamed the Pleistocenes; there were the Soul Healers, who professed to cure all ailments by enlarging the natural orifice of the soul so that the light of truth could penetrate it; and there was a theosophist who preached a new eugenic doctrine—the so-called Telegenetic Doctrine of conception at a distance. . . . Then there was

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Lady Gerrald who defended and practised experimental matrimony until a state of perfect conjugal felicity was reached. According to her, it was the duty of every human being to celebrate a rapid and hurried sequence of marriages until he (or she) found the twin soul with whom she (or he) would be united after death, in "everlasting marriage," embarking upon an eternal honeymoon—that permanent conjunction of souls, in the other life, for which one should prepare oneself in this by sacrificing one's own body without distinction or discrimination, to anyone, anywhere and anyhow. Lady Gerrald had founded a sect—The Nest of Love—whose members swarmed through the lanes at night. When they met anybody they surrounded him and sang their love song, which ended with this refrain:

I ask from you, and want from you,
The love of you—because you're you.

Sborrelli had set his eye on Lady Gerrald and had imagined a sensational arrest; but when he thought of carrying it out he began to hesitate. He learned that this notorious lady was the niece of a prominent English peer: she herself threatened now and again to "write to her uncle"; everybody took it for granted that her uncle must be a big-wig in Downing Street, and that a note from her to the Ambassador in Rome would be sufficient to send the Inspector of Police to Sardinia.

Even the Inspector himself became convinced that it would be wiser to leave her in peace and to wink at her dangerous propaganda. Meanwhile Lady Gerrald's sect had been disbanded, and she was left to carry on her propaganda alone. She wandered about at night, usually intoxicated; she opened the gates and climbed the walls of villas, demanding hospitality at every house. She had become so used to sleeping in other people's houses that she had even forgotten the name of her own hotel.

One night she presented herself at the Police Station, as she had often done before. The Inspector tried to get rid of her; he



advised her to go and knock at the Customs House or at the barracks of the Municipal Guards or at the Signal Station; he begged her to leave the police in peace. But that night Lady Gerrald would not be sent away; she said she had been wounded and had come to protest and claim the protection due to her position. She had been very seriously wounded, she said.

"Where?" the Inspector demanded.

It was the Inspector's ignorance of the customs of the English aristocracy which made him ask "Where?" He did not know that there are places in which a lady of the English aristocracy can be wounded, that cannot be mentioned. Lady Gerrald with the tact and composure which she never lost even when she was drunk, parried the question and answered:

"At the Villa Euphorbia."

"A matter of penetration?" the Inspector persisted with an official air.

But Lady Gerrald could not be more precise, she did not understand these technical terms. She explained that after dinner she had gone for a walk with a friend—or with two or three friends, she couldn't be quite sure—and they had all entered the garden of the Villa Euphorbia together. They had rested there for some time and as she was lying down in the garden she suddenly felt a weapon stabbing her body, a pointed weapon—perhaps the thorn of a monster agave—yes, she was sure it must have been an agave. Unfortunately she could not say precisely where. She had uttered a shrill scream, and had heard a mocking laugh in a clump of prickly pears. Then, in a guttural German accent, she heard the words: *Qui s'y frotte s'y pique*. She had been wounded and wished to bring an action for damages; all she wanted was justice. Plants like that should not be allowed to grow in a civilized country. If the Inspector didn't act promptly she would write to her uncle, Lord . . . Of course the Inspector realized who her uncle was?

The Inspector did *not* know exactly who Lady Gerrald's uncle was, but he did know vaguely that he was an English



peer, and that English peers have a way of making trouble: for a mere trifle they go running to the House of Lords, protest and call for diplomatic intervention; they communicate with the Ambassador in Rome, the Ambassador complains to the Minister of the Interior, the Minister refers it to the Head of the Police, the Head of the Police writes to the Chief Constable, the Chief Constable gives orders to the Superintendent; the Superintendent holds an enquiry . . . and the poor Inspector is sent to Sardinia. . . .

Sborrelli decided to act; so, shortly before dawn, he knocked at the gate of the Villa Euphorbia.

Picaro, Pfeiffer's servant, came and opened it and said that he would announce him at once.

No, his master was not sleeping; he was in the Grotto of the Stapelias.

He went and returned immediately, and, telling the Inspector that his master would be very pleased to see him, made a sign for him to follow.

When the Inspector reached the entrance of the grotto, he came straight to the point, without as much as a greeting.

"A complaint has been lodged. Criminal negligence. Wounding with an agave."

"*Jawohl, jawohl! Ja, ja entzückt . . .*" replied Pfeiffer without turning round.

"I have come"—Sborrelli continued to explain—"on behalf of Lady Gerrald, about that thorny plant . . . the lady has been wounded. If the plant is poisonous—and even if it isn't poisonous it may have been penetrating."

"*Ja, jawohl! Qui s'y frotte . . .* But do sit down, my dear Inspector, you are very lucky, you have come just in time. Look."

Sborrelli looked. Over the walls decorated by natural stalactite formations, spread a network of fleshy branches, humid and viscous, starred with great velvety flowers from which a nauseous odour emanated. Pfeiffer was bending over a globular excrescence of rock which the rays of the rising sun illuminated brightly. He made a sign to Sborrelli to approach



and pointed out to him a large flower with flesh-coloured petals, from which pink moisture dripped and collected at the bottom of the corolla. Around the flower a swarm of greedy insects buzzed.

"You are really in luck, you happen to be just in time to see the flowering of the *Stapelia carnaria*. . . . It is the first time it has flowered in Capri; I have waited for this flower for three years. To-night Picaro told me it was nearly ready and I came at the very moment when it was opening. . . . Come nearer, smell it! Courage! Ah, you should have smelt it when the flower first burst its calyx; it was like opening a coffin!

"I am experimenting," he continued, "on the maternal instinct of the *Calliphora vomitoria*—the butcher's fly—look at that chap at the bottom of the corolla. The other, which is buzzing round—that fellow with the steel-blue corselet—is the *Sarcophaga* which is too cunning to be deceived. The *Calliphora*, on the other hand, always falls into the trap which the *Stapelia* sets for it: as you see, the fly has laid its eggs at the bottom of the corolla and in a few hours the larvæ will hatch out, wretched little worms which will imagine that they are going to feed on putrid flesh, instead of which they will be devoured by the false nurse!"

The Inspector, under the spell of that appalling scent, was astonished, almost fascinated by what he saw. He suspected some kind of criminal perversity. *Calliphora vomitoria*? . . . No, in all the Sherlock Holmes' literature, which he knew by heart, he had never met that fly. . . . And that cadaverous odour. . . . Impossible that it should come from a flower: *Stapelia* . . . ?

In his confusion he remembered another corpse . . . the corpse of Ophelia. . . . He had heard of the corpse of Ophelia, floating on the water, before. He had even seen it, at the theatre: Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, a detective drama . . . with Ophelia . . . Ophelia . . . *Stapelia*? What connection could there be?

Pfeiffer, absorbed in his experiment, continued:

“I know that everybody in Capri criticises me; my own colleagues criticise me—Pappenheim, Ravel and Ochs—even Ochs—snigger at my methods. Do you know my methods? Proof and counter-proof. . . . But have you ever thought of the opportunities for genetic inversion that Capri offers? . . .”

“I can’t say I have,” the Inspector replied, and then, collecting himself, he took the opportunity of reminding Pfeiffer of the object of his visit. But Pfeiffer, who was not listening, continued to pursue the thread of his incomprehensible theory.

“I will grant you the whole theory of evolution by natural selection, I will give you Darwin; you can keep him. I will also give you Spencer, Hæckel . . .”

The Inspector nodded his head as if to thank him, and Pfeiffer continued:

“Yes, I will give you Hæckel. Keep all the commonplaces of evolution; start, if you want to do so, from the protoplasm, and continue, if you feel like it, as far as the elephant. I can follow you perfectly, from the glacial period, through phases in which the earth’s crust grew warm. But you, on your side, must admit that we find we are dealing with a thermal—or, if you prefer it—a biothermal process. Do you agree?”

The Inspector stared at him perplexedly, and Pfeiffer looked threatening:

“Can you dare to deny me your own premise, the Origin of Species by Evolution?”

The moment of irritation passed quickly: Inspector Sborrelli assured him, with a look, that he agreed.

“Good,” Pfeiffer continued, “I see that you at least are not obstinate like Samuel Ochs. Samuel Ochs, as you know, has the brain of a louse. You on the other hand understand; you are intelligent. Follow me, and take yourself back to the palæozoic age. Think of the first forms of life—I don’t mean protoplasm, nor all the other gelatinous creatures which left no trace of their existence in the palæozoic rock; but think, I say, of the silurian; of the first living species that signified their existence by the imprint of a paw, the impression of a vertebra



or of a shield—some trace of their passage on the journey of their species. Think of the trilobites, of the labyrinthodont . . . do you follow me?

"And you agree with me that we find ourselves constantly confronted with a biothermic process: the earth's crust becomes warm, fish come out of the water in the garb of the ichthyosaurus; gradually the temperature increases and the dinosaurus appears. But as soon as the reptile becomes perfect, it is no longer content to crawl on earth; it puts on wings and becomes the *Archeopteryx*. . . . Is that quite clear?"

With these words Pfeiffer took the Inspector's arm and dragged him down the path which led to the villa.

Sborrelli let him do it: his instinct warned him that perhaps he was on the track of some crime committed by a man of whom everybody was frightened, from whom everybody fled. "The first foreigner that I chance on," Sborrelli had always repeated, "I will run him in." And Pfeiffer himself was drawing him toward the mysterious villa in which so many horrors were suspected, where there lay, perhaps, at this very moment the proof of a crime. . . .

" . . . Another moment—two or three million years—and here we are in the lower pliocene." Pfeiffer had opened the door of the laboratory, had pushed the Inspector inside, and offering him a chair had bade him be seated; then, taking up the thread of his discourse again, he continued an argument that set Sborrelli's head spinning.

" . . . Do you still follow me? Very well; we are now, as I was saying, in the lower pliocene; we find ourselves confronted by a conglomerate of mammalian bones: *Elephas antiquus* . . . *Ursus spelæus*." Then, pointing to an almost human jaw which acted as a paper-weight on the table, he went on: "And here we come, at last, to the Missing Link. Now, my dear Inspector, you will understand my sympathy for you. . . . Allow me?"

With these words he stretched out his hand to grasp the jaw of Inspector Sborrelli, who, frightened and offended, sprang back, upsetting the chair.

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"I—the Missing Link?" he shouted indignantly.

The noise which the falling chair had made, let loose a pandemonium. From the end of the laboratory there came a shrill screaming of birds and a pair of doves fluttered madly, beating their wings against the wires of a large cage. After a moment, when calm returned, Pfeiffer pushed the Inspector toward the birdcage and continued to speak:

"Remember what I told you: I have granted you evolution from the reptile to the bird. Now you may observe this attempt at involution: I have made these doves hatch serpents; a week ago this *Coluber* was born—do not be frightened, it is the common harmless serpent of the island. . . ."

One of the doves, that had beaten its head against the top of the cage, had fallen back half dead on its nest, and was fighting desperately to free its neck from the coils of a little serpent which had encircled it. The little snake had fastened two sharp teeth under the bird's beak, and a few drops of blood reddened the feathers on its white neck. Pfeiffer was excited at the sight, his eyes shone and suddenly he burst out with a great laugh. Calming himself, he showed the Inspector a cage near by in which two terrified canaries were perched. In the nest beneath them, which should have contained the fruit of their lawful loves, a little lizard, only just born, all soft and lazy, was making slow efforts to free itself from the egg which the canaries had hatched.

Pfeiffer opened the cage, freed the little lizard from its shell, placed it upside down on the palm of his hand and pointed to a little yellow streak under the neck: "Do you see?" he said. "A slight primordial pigmentation; this is only the first experiment; but in thirty of forty generations the colouration will have invaded all the epithelial tissues and Capri will have its yellow lizards: *Lacerta flava canariensis*!"

The Inspector was more perplexed than ever. Then Pfeiffer shook him by the arm and pushed him toward a cage in which a large goose struggled to free itself from the grip of a formidable crayfish. At the bottom of the cage there was a tank in which were enormous lobsters moving their threatening



claws. Pfeiffer surveyed them with evident satisfaction. He gave an evil laugh.

"An attempt at hybridisation! . . . Don't you know my hybrids? I am trying at the moment to produce a cross between winged creatures and crustaceans. . . . Dear friend, if you admit the process of evolution, you must surely grant me the reverse process: involution by artificial selection. From the bird to reptile, from reptile to amphibian, from amphibian to fish . . . and then, slipping down the ladder of species, the *amœba*, protoplasm, primordial inorganic matter, back to the first inanimate cosmic essence: to the unborn. . . . Now, do you follow me?"

As Pfeiffer spoke, he drew nearer and nearer the Inspector. He fixed him with staring, greedy eyes, and made as if to touch his jaw again; but then, staying his hand in mid air, he whispered a monstrous proposal in his ear.

"You yourself . . . if you could only oblige me." And then persuasively: "Why don't you? Let's try!"

Sborrelli gaped at him, his eyes wide open with astonishment, and Pfeiffer, interpreting his silence as consent took from a shelf a glass jar in which swam certain strange reddish bodies shaped like cherries split in half.

"Would you like to try? . . ."

Sborrelli hardly had the strength to say:

"Try? What have you got in that jar?"

"*Inus* glands, in a solution of normal saline. *Inus ecaudatus*. I can guarantee you a successful graft . . ."

"Grafting? On me?"

"Yes, on to you, dear friend; your jaw has fascinated me from the first moment that I saw it; it has a simian character. Wouldn't you like to lend yourself to science, for the sake of humanity . . . ?"

"*Inus ecaudatus*, you said. What the devil is that?"

"It is the tailless macaque. . . . A big ape without a tail."

The Inspector kept his head. He pulled his wits together; then all of a sudden he remembered the explanations that Pfeiffer had given to him. At last he saw light! Was this what

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Pfeiffer meant by involution? He had a terrible vision of what involution might mean to *him*, if he consented to undergo this experiment. He thought of slow degradation: from Inspector to sergeant, from sergeant to corporal, to lance-corporal, to plain constable . . . and then, still lower down, to a mere civilian. And from man to ape. . . .

"*Inus* you said? . . ."

" . . . *ecaudatus*. Tailless; but if you would prefer a tail, I have also the glands of a baboon. . . ."

"A baboon? *Me?* You are under arrest, sir. Outrage on the public forces. Follow me !"

Pfeiffer offered no resistance. He allowed himself to be handcuffed and followed the Inspector to the Police Station, and from the Police Station to the Communal Prison.

Doctor Rolff Pfeiffer, echinocereologist, was summarily sentenced to two months, but he only spent a fortnight in our prison; on the fifteenth day they had to remove him to the Lunatic Asylum at Capodichino, which was really very fortunate for Capri.

Because, if he had remained on the island, we should have known by this time all the horrors of Involution by Artificial Selection. Sborrelli, by his presence of mind, removed that terrible prospect; but if it had happened to anyone else—and it might have happened to anybody—only imagine the horror of that slow process of retrogression! From man to the primitive caveman, from mammal to reptile, from reptile to fish. . . . There must be tragic moments in involution that nobody could possibly face without horror. Imagine, for instance, passing from vertebrate to mollusc!

Yes, from fish to mollusc, from mollusc to *amœba*, to protoplasm . . . to the unborn!

It makes one shudder only to think of it.





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